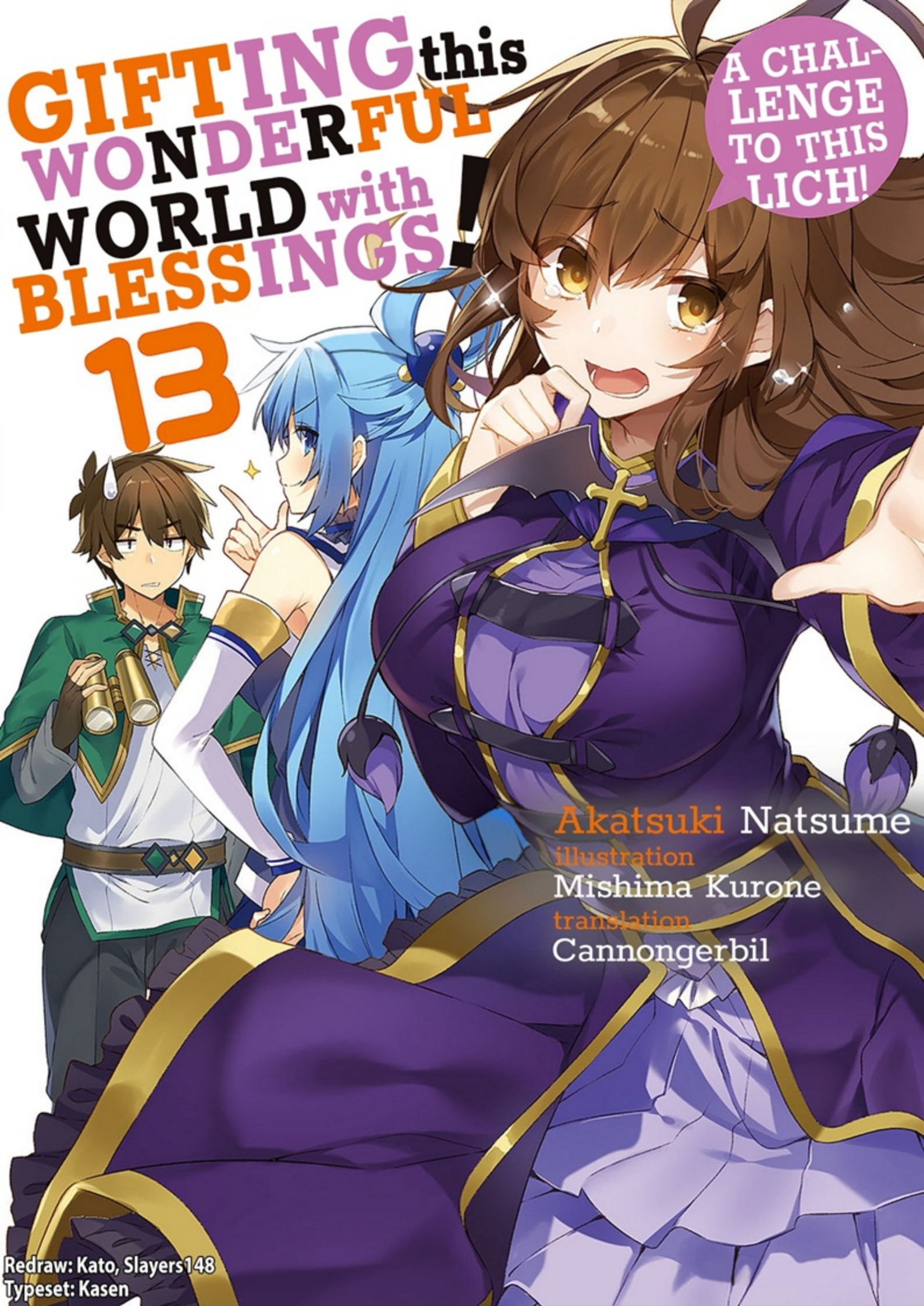


GIFTING this
WONDERFUL
WORLD with
BLESSINGS!
13

A CHALLENGE
TO THIS
LICH!



Akatsuki Natsume
illustration
Mishima Kurone
translation
Cannongerbil

Kono Subarashii Sekai ni Shukufuku o!

— God's Blessing on This Wonderful World! —

**- Volume 13 -
A Challenge to this Lich**

**-Author-
Akatsuki Natsume**

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[Cannongerbil | CGTranslations]



GIFTING this
WONDERFUL
WORLD with
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A CHALLENGE
TO THIS
LICH!

13



peek

SAY,
CAN YOU
SELL
THAT
TO ME?

EXPLOSION
MANIAC
MEGUMIN

AQUA

HEY,
DOESN'T
IT FEEL
LIKE THE
PANTIES
CAN BE
REMOVED
TOO!?

HOW
COULD
YOU MAKE
SUCH A
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I HAD NO
CHOICE,
I RAN OUT
OF POCKET
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I'M QUITE
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HOW IT
TURNED OUT.
THIS WILL
SURELY
FETCH A
HIGH PRICE.

CLAY
FIGURINE
NUMBER 2:
EXPLOSION
MANIAC
MEGUMIN!

MEGUMIN



MY DEBTS,
MY DEBTS....!

JUST THEN, A NEARBY
ADVENTURER WAS BEING
ATTACKED BY MONSTERS,
BUT AQUA AND WIZ WERE TOO
FOCUSED ON SWINGING
THEIR PICKAXES TO NOTICE.

WIZ

LET'S GET
TO WORK,
KAZUMA! TIME
IS MONEY!
WE ARE GOING
TO DIG UNTIL
OUR BAGS ARE
BURSTING!



LINKNOWN MAN

I'M SURE YOU KNOW WHY
I CALLED YOU OUT HERE.
JUST AS I SAID THE OTHER
DAY... I'VE ALWAYS BEEN
THINKING ABOUT YOU. I'VE
TRAINED MY BODY SO
THAT I'LL BE A WORTHY
FIT FOR YOU.

Y-YOU WANT
ME TO MARRY
YOU...!

SEEMS
LIKE THIS
MAN CALLED
WIZ OUT HERE
TO CONFESS
TO HER.

Character

Aqua

Job Archpriest

The uncontrollable goddess of water. Her speciality is party tricks.

Kazuma

Job Adventurer

Our NEET inclined protagonist. His speciality is his high luck.

Darkness

Job Crusader

Masochistic female knight specialized in defence. Is actually the lady of a great noble house.

Megumin

Job Archmage

The foremost genius of the Crimson Demon. Has no interest in anything other than Explosion Magic.

Chomusuke

Emperor Zell

Vanir

A great devil with an unknown age. Helps out at Wiz's store.

Wiz

Runs a magic item shop in Axel. Is a lich, but has a peace loving personality.

GIFTING this WONDERFUL WORLD with BLESSINGS! 13

A CHALLENGE TO THIS LICH!



CONTENTS

Prologue
P003



Ch1

GIFTING BLESSINGS UPON THE MEETING WITH THIS TREASURE ISLAND!

P005

Ch2

GIFTING DIVINE PUNISHMENT UPON THIS HAREM PROTAGONIST!

P051

Ch3

GIFTING AID TO THIS VICTIM OF STALKING!

P104

Ch4

GIFTING A GODDESS'S BLESSING UPON THIS MAN!

P149

Ch5

GIFTING A SINCERE LOVE FOR THIS LICH!

P192

EPILOGUE

P239



Afterword
P245

Prologue

At a modest magic item shop tucked away in the back alleys of Axel, the usual commotion could be heard.

“Shopkeeper with the rare skill of exclusively stocking up on trash, why don’t you go ahead and explain to Moi, why exactly is this garbage sitting in front of us?”

“Calling my skills rare... I’ll still buy this item even if you compliment me, Vanir-san.”

“Moi was not complimenting you, you useless shopkeep! Just tell me the good points of this product!”

After being startled by Vanir’s outburst, Wiz offered up a stuffed doll.

“The products I bought this time are stuffed animals. Of course, it’s not simply a cute looking toy. Behold! It’s a wondrous item that will automatically follow its owner once they are registered! By giving them to children, we’ll never have to worry about children getting lost ever again!”

“I see. Tell me, what exactly are its downsides?”

“Roger! It’ll always follow its owner even if they aren’t lost, so I suppose it might cause the children to cry when they wake up in the middle of the night to visit the toilet.”

Hearing that, Vanir silently crossed out the purchase papers.

“Vanir-san! Do you really wish to abandon the lost children of the world!?”

“Do you really want to hear the cries of children so badly?”

Such is the everyday sight that greeted us as we opened the door to the magic item shop.

After scolding Wiz, Vanir noticed our entrance and welcomed us with a wide smile.

A small flower appeared in front of Wiz.

The one who offered it to her was Sylphina.

She's the noble girl that the town's adventurers, along with various other people in this town, banded together to aid a couple of days ago.

"Onee-san, thank you very much for your help the other day."

Wiz crouched down to be face-to-face with the shyly smiling girl and gave her a gentle smile.

"This is Wiz's Magical Item Shop. It's stocked full of various useful items. If you ever feel unwell again, or run into some other problem... Please feel free to visit anytime."

Chapter 1

Blessings upon this encounter with the Treasure Island

Part 1

Cheeky voices could be heard coming from the adventurer's guild.

"Mommy!"

"You think you can make fun of the nobility and they'll just take it lying down? Stay right there! I'll kill all of you!"

Her face bright red, Darkness swung her fist at the adventurer who screamed 'Mommy' at her, who easily dodged the swing and continued his mockery.

"Mommy, why you angry? I'm hungry, mommy! Give me boobie-Gaaah!"

His teasing was interrupted by Darkness grabbing him by the neck, causing him to let out a chicken-like squawk.

Darkness, who was about to pop a vein, smiled after finally getting ahold of the adventurer.

Just then,

"Come on, Darkness, acting so violently during a party is against etiquette, you know? Look at everyone having fun. Is it really so hard to read the mood?"

Hearing Aqua acting so elegantly, Darkness released the adventurer who was teasing her and dropped to her knees.

"A-Aqua is telling me to read the mood..."

Seems like she received quite a huge shock from that.

One of the female adventurers approached her with a wide grin on her face.

“Mommy! I need your help collecting ingredients for my cure, so boobie- ah, wait, ow ow ow ow!”

The woman mocking Darkness shrieked as Darkness grabbed her breasts.

“If you want boobs so much, why don’t you use your own!? Here, I’ll squeeze them for you!”

“Stop! Lalatina-chan, stop! You’re tearing them off!”

It hasn’t been long since Darkness’s daughter- I mean, cousin fell ill and we struggled to gather the ingredients to cure her.

The effects of the medicine were stunning, and she almost instantly recovered enough to accompany us on a picnic. Now, she’s well enough to commute to school from Darkness’s home every day.

Then, Sylphina said that she would like to thank all the adventurers who helped her.

Seeing Darkness bring Sylphina to the guild, one of the adventurers called for a celebratory toast, and this is the result.

“There’s a child here, so stop screaming about boobs this and boobies that! Megumin’s mood is getting worse, so let’s put a stop to all this boob talk right here!”

“You’re the one who said it the most, Aqua! And I’m not in a bad mood, don’t make it sound like I have a complex about my breasts!”

The guild has pretty much completely turned into a party hall. It’s filled with the clinking of mugs and cheers to Sylphina’s recovery.

And at the center of it all is, of course...

“T-Thank you very much, everyone. I’ve recovered thanks to you...”

Sylphina said in a soft voice, slightly embarrassed and blushing red, but with a smile on her face.

Hearing her words of gratitude, the adventurers cheered yet again.

“Right, it’s Darkness’s treat, so let’s drink till we drop! I’m in a good mood today, so let me show you my special party trick!”

“Uuu, I feel like I always end up getting teased whenever I visit the adventurer’s guild recently... Just why did it end up like this...?”

By this point, Darkness was completely surrounded by a crowd of drunk adventurers repeatedly chanting ‘boobies’.

Seeing Darkness hang her head in embarrassment, I stood in front of her.

“Alright, cut it out!”

“Ka-Kazuma...”

The guild fell silent after my roar.

Feeling Darkness’s expectant gaze on my back, I raised my voice and loudly declared,

“Her boobs belong only to me!”



“I’ll kill you!”

Darkness proceeded to strangle me.

And a healthy-looking Sylphina smiled as she looked upon this scene.

Part 2

– My name is Satou Kazuma

My life has been quite peaceful as of late.

Thinking back, I accepted coming to this world because I admired typical fantasy adventures, but I haven't been able to go on any adventurer-like quests until recently.

But just the other day, I completed an actual, proper-sounding quest to save a sick girl.

I faced many strong enemies, saved the girl, and reached a happy ending where I lived comfortably with my companions.

It wouldn't be a bad way to close the curtains on the adventures of a certain hikikomori...

Yeah, now should be the time for proper heroes who've received actual powers to step in.

I'm not the protagonist of some fantasy story.

I should spend the rest of my days in peace while praying for world peace.

And thus...

"Right, then please sign or stamp here. Thank you very much! We'll be receiving many other high-quality ingredients in the future, so please visit us again. Thank you for your patronage!"

"Ah, thank you! I'll hit you up again soon!"

I wish to live a luxurious and elegant life as a rich man.

"...Say, Kazuma, just what exactly did you order?"

"This? Hehe, listen and be amazed! This is that famous dragon meat!"

On that day.

After receiving the package from a peddler of high-quality ingredients, I proudly held it up above my head and showed it off to Darkness.

“Dragon meat!? You splurged again!?”

As its name suggests, it’s the meat of a dragon, the strongest monster. It’s a high-quality ingredient that’s said to be able to raise a person’s stats just by consuming it.

“Shut up, you penniless noble! You don’t understand the economy at all!”

“Eh?”

Darkness let out a surprised yelp as I thrust my finger at her.

“Listen up, Darkness, someone who can easily earn big bucks like me needs to constantly spend that money instead of simply sitting on it. If too many rich people sit on their money, it’ll cause the economy to stagnate. If anything, what I’m doing now is a praiseworthy act of charity.”

My information is definitely reliable.

I saw it on TV, after all.

“Is-Is that so? I was taught to keep my feet firmly planted on the ground, so I don’t usually splurge on luxuries...”

Darkness had a wavering expression on her face, and I wagged my finger in front of her.

“You really are foolish. There’s a proper reason for nobles to throw extravagant parties, you know? When rich nobles spend money, the money will end up in the hands of the commoners in the town. And when the commoners have money, that will naturally attract merchants seeking to make a profit off them. When a city has more merchants, life in the town will become more comfortable and bustling. Once such rumours spread, new residents will be attracted to live in the town, and as the residents in the city increase, so would the tax revenue that the nobles collect.”

“Wha... I-Is that how it works?!”

Darkness sounded impressed after hearing my explanation.

I just randomly made up such lines in order to support my behavior now that I'm a rich man. Is it really okay for a noble lady to be so gullible?

"That's why I'm living such a luxurious life. Plus, I've heard that eating dragon meat can raise your stats. My stats haven't been increasing much recently even after leveling up from eating high-quality ingredients. I'm just using my wealth to further raise my power in preparation for future battles with the Demon King's Generals."

"Ka-Kazuma... you even thought that far... In that case, I'll use my family's funds to buy dragon meat for you."

This girl is just way too gullible.

Trusting an amateur's opinion so easily makes me uncomfortable too, you know?

"W-well, we shouldn't take it too far. And, you know, eating dragon meat every day will get tiresome, so we don't have to buy it every day. I just heard it was a high-quality ingredient, so I bought it to sample..."

"I didn't expect you to be willing to brave the tough and stinky dragon meat to become stronger... I really misjudged you. I don't really like eating dragon meat because it's so disgusting, but... It'll be fine. This is to raise our power as adventurers, so I'm sure my father will understand."

Eh?

"Hey, is dragon meat really tough and stinky? It's a high-quality ingredient, so isn't it supposed to be delicious?"

"Dragons are the strongest of monsters. They are mostly muscle with little fat to speak of, and their flesh stinks just like the flesh of other carnivores. It's only high-quality because it increases your stats if you eat it."

Ehh...

"Say, Megumin, do you have any interest in high-quality-"

"I have pride in my lineage as a Crimson Demon, so why would I have any interest in the power of dragons? You can have that draconic power all to yourself."

Megumin interrupted me as she played with Chomusuke, who was sleeping on the carpet.

“...Aqua, you’re a gourmet like me, so-”

“I already have high stats, so there’s no point in raising them any higher. I’ll pass on dragon’s meat. You can savour it all by yourself, weakling.”

Aqua, who was laying on the sofa while waving her legs around, said such heartless things.

“What are you saying?! You’re eating this too! Maybe some dragon meat will finally raise that pitiful intelligence of yours!”

“Whose intelligence is pitiful, you brute!? The brilliant me has no need for that stuff. Look at this! Would someone with pitiful intelligence be capable of making such a thing?”

Aqua, who had been messing around with something while humming a tune for quite some time, proudly showed what she was working on to me.

“Clay figurine number two, Explosion Maniac Megumin! I’m quite proud of how this turned out. I’m sure it’ll fetch quite a high price.”

“Hold on, Aqua! That’s what you were making with all that clay? You didn’t add any dangerous details under the dress, did you?!”

What Aqua showed off was a 1/12 scale Megumin clay doll that wouldn’t seem out of place next to the figurines of my world.

She gathered clay from the garden this morning and somehow turned that into this highly detailed figurine in front of me. I could even see a flash of her underwear beneath the folds of her dress.

“I couldn’t help it, I ran out of pocket money. That strange devil said that he’ll buy anything of worth I wish to sell, so I’ve been making figurines of the adventurers in Axel and selling it to him.”

“Then you could’ve just made figurines of yourself! Ah, hold on, it feels like the panties can be removed too! You didn’t...!”

...

“Say, can you sell that to me?”

“I’ll give you a discount.”

“I’ll blow both of you up! Give that to me, Aqua! In the first place, didn’t you already get some pocket money from Kazuma!? What do you keep spending all of it on!?”



peek

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NUMBER 2:
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MANIAC
MEGUMIN!

Megumin started snatching at the figurine, and Aqua fiercely resisted.

Then, with a wavering voice, Darkness said towards Aqua,

“Hey, Aqua, about what you said earlier... you said it’s clay figurine number 2, right? Then, number one is...”

“Clay figurine number one is scantily-clad noble, Lewdtina. It was really tough to recreate the lewd negligee you often wear as of late. Though, I got quite a good price for it.”

Darkness rushed out of the house before Aqua could complete her sentence.

I’ll have her recreate the scantily clad noble for me later.

–Just then,

Almost immediately after Darkness rushed through it, someone knocked softly on the front door and opened it.

Just as I was about to ask if she forgot something and looked over,

“Umm, is Megumin here?”

I saw Yunyun standing at the door with a basket full of fruits in one hand, acting really suspiciously for some reason–

“–It’s just low-grade tea, but, please enjoy.”

“T-Thank you very much.”

Just as Yunyun sat on the sofa, Aqua quickly offered her some freshly-brewed tea.

Perhaps because she finds visiting a friend’s house a novel experience no matter how many times she comes here, Yunyun restlessly looked around the place.

“Um, this is just a simple gift, but...”

Almost as if in exchange, Yunyun placed the fruit basket on the table.

“...Well, it’s nice for you to bring gifts, but what did you come here for?”

Megumin asked as she looked through the fruits in the basket, and Yunyun brought out a letter.

“This is a letter I got from the village...”

Megumin opened the letter, and Aqua and I shifted next to her so we could read it as well.

Yunyun gazed into the teacup that Aqua offered her with a troubled expression.

Glancing in the cup, I noticed that all that is in there is hot water.

...I think it’d be best to teach Aqua how to properly brew a cup of tea soon.

In place of Megumin, who has already read further ahead, I read the letter out loud.

“Let’s see... My glorious comrades, the time has come. Now’s the time to sharpen your axes and show off the fangs that you’ve so carefully honed. May all who have received this letter return to the Crimson Demon Village within the month-”

This letter goes on like this for quite some time, but in short, the Crimson Demons are about to perform the ceremony to choose their next chief, and this letter is an invitation to anyone who wishes to toss their name into the hat.

Having finished reading the letter, Megumin clenched her fist and confidently declared,

“I see, so you acknowledge me as a potential chief of the Crimson Demons. Very well, let’s make preparations for the journey, Yunyun! Let me demonstrate that I am indeed the one most suitable to be declared the most exalted of the Crimson Demons!”

“Eeh? You need to at least know Advanced Magic and Teleport to even undertake the trial, you know? And we don’t need to make any preparations, I can take us there in an instant with Teleport.”

Hearing Yunyun's words, Megumin dropped her fist.

"...Then why did you bring this letter to me?"

"Knowing you, if I don't tell you in advance, I'm sure you'll come and make trouble for me. You're my rival... Ow! C-cut it out! Don't vent your anger on me just because you don't have the qualifications to take the trial."

Megumin, who grabbed Yunyun's shoulder and started shaking her, looked at me with a placid expression.

"Kazuma, seems like she's done with her business here, so shall we get to work on dinner?"

"Yeah, we should. Hey, it's getting late, so why don't you join us for dinner, Yunyun? You even brought us a gift, after all."

Yunyun broke out into a wide smile upon hearing that.

"C-Can I?! But having dinner together feels like a family affair, so I feel like I shouldn't be here, actually in the first place visiting this late is my fault, so, sorry, Kazuma-san, but showing up at a friend's house uninvited and joining them for dinner is, ah, no, it's not like I dislike it, actually I'm really happy that you invited me and-"

"Oh shut up, it's just having dinner together! You don't need to get that excited over it!"

Megumin cut Yunyun off as she excitedly broke out into rapid-fire speech. At the same time, I moved over to the kitchen and started making preparations.



After that, Yunyun was served the somewhat foul-tasting dragon meat. That, coupled with being served warm water earlier, made her think that we didn't like her for barging in so suddenly and eventually resulted in her crying...

Part 3

The next day, Megumin, Aqua, and I visited the magic item shop.

“Wiz, Vanir, are you here? I had some free time, so I came to visit...”

As I opened the door to the store, the sounds of a quarrel reached my ears.

“Why, why can’t you just listen what Moi says! Moi is the devil that sees through all! If you would just listen to me and follow my instructions, you wouldn’t end up in the red! Why must you attract garbage to you like a lamp attracts bugs in the summer!?”

“If I only listen to what Vanir-san says, then it might as well be your shop! I want to make this shop prosper together with you, Vanir-san! We are immortal, so we can both take our time! And the items I brought in today aren’t garbage!”

Seems like Vanir and Wiz were arguing inside the shop.

“What are you guys arguing about this early in the morning? Did Wiz bring in some strange products again?”

“Oh, if it isn’t the newly-rich brat! Moi has gotten some really good products today! Hey, hurry up and get rid of that garbage!”

Vanir launched into a suspicious-sounding sales pitch upon seeing me

Upon hearing his words, Wiz immediately hugged the huge box placed by her feet.

“I’ll say it upfront, but I don’t need it. Anyway, it doesn’t seem like Darkness has arrived yet. I heard her say that she was going to bring Sylphina here to thank you for all the help you’ve provided during that incident.”

“The best form of thanks would be to buy those pieces of trash off my hands. Still, she really is an honest noble lady. She tearfully bought the scantily-clad noble figurine at double the price last night. Anyway, brat who’s been proceeding well with your companions recently, Moi really has a good deal for you today, so why not hear me out?”

Vanir slipped a bottle into my hand while Megumin and Aqua were distracted by the

box that Wiz was protecting.

“I won’t buy anything that seems suspicious... what’s this?”

“It’s a contraceptive. By the way, it goes for ten thousand eris.”

...

“Right.”

I discreetly slipped the money to Vanir while everyone was looking away.

“Thank you for your patronage! It’ll remain effective for a week after a man drinks it. And, esteemed customer, there are some energizing potions and aromatics that will help put things in the mood here that will go well with that...”

“I’ll buy them. I’ll buy them all.”

“Thank you very much!”

Hearing me answer without hesitation, Megumin came over.

“You look pretty pleased with yourself, just what did you buy?”

“I bought some things to protect my companions. You’re all my important companions, after all. It wouldn’t do to start panicking if something does happen.”

I said that with a straight face, and Megumin suddenly became bashful.

“After saving Sylphina the other day... You always have your companions in mind...”

“Uh, yeah.”

Facing her innocent gaze, I gave a vague answer while carefully stowing the bottle away.

This is just as a precaution, there’s no need for me to feel guilty about it.

And I shouldn’t have said anything that would arouse her suspicions.

-Just then,

The door opened with a slam, and someone rushed into the store.

I thought that it was Darkness for a moment. It wouldn't be too odd for her to barge in like this.

When I turned around,

“Vanir-sama, please help me-!”

Something black was screaming and hurtling towards me. At that moment,

“Sacred High Exorcism!”

“Byaaaaaa!”

The penguin-like costume thing was purified by Aqua's magic.

“What's with this pen-pen? Hey, Kazuma, this pen-pen just reeks of a devil. I really hate that it looks this cute while smelling like that.”



The familiar penguin collapsed to the floor.

Judging from the sound it made, it seems like it was completely empty now.

“You really have no mercy... This is the something-or-the-other count that we visited in order to get the ingredient we need for Sylphina’s cure... Though it seems like he’s dead now.”

“I see, so this is the devil that bullied Darkness. I just let my magic loose because I felt something unpleasant, but this is fine. I wanted to go exorcise him after hearing the story from you.”

“That’s unfair, Aqua. I wanted to take revenge for Darkness too...”

Ignoring us, Vanir sighed and went to the penguin’s side. He slightly opened the zipper on the penguin’s back and softly blew into the gap.

As he did so, the empty costume suddenly started inflating again-

“Eh?”

After Vanir zipped the costume again, the penguin leapt to his feet.

“Sacred High-”

“Hey, stop that, you’ll vanquish him again. Come on, he’s already scared out of his wits.”

The trembling penguin hurriedly hid behind the shelf upon seeing Aqua start chanting her magic again.

“V-V-Vanir-sama, this violent blue-haired woman, could she be...”

“Yes, as you might have suspected, she’s our natural enemy. Your remaining lives were all purified by her upon entering my store, but because you expired in front of me, Moi was able to restore one of your lives. However, if you run into her in the future without me around, then that’ll be it.”

The penguin trembled even more violently.

Seeing that, Aqua started swinging her fist in his direction, as if to threaten him.

“Um... I don't know who you are, but you are an acquaintance of Vanir-san, yes? I'll go put on some tea.”

“A-Ah, I don't need to eat or drink, so you don't have to do that for me...”

Still hugging the box, Wiz casually welcomed the penguin.

As Megumin and I leisurely savoured the tea that Wiz brought out, Vanir tilted his head in confusion.

“So, what brings you here today, Zereschrute? Actually, you are a high-ranking devil in your own right, so Moi really didn't expect you to be vanquished from just a single blow. What happened to the other lives you had in stock?”

“T-that's... I ran into a big problem recently...”

Every time their eyes meet, Aqua would strike a spell casting pose to threaten him. Trembling, the penguin squeaked,

“The Goddess Eris has been appearing at my castle every day to kill me. That's why all my lives are gone.”

I spat out my tea.

I heard that she has no mercy for devils, but what the hell is that goddess doing?

Are goddesses always that free?

Or is she taking revenge after seeing her old pal Darkness treated so horribly?

Seems like she didn't let him go the last time because she was merciful, but merely because she was prioritizing treating Darkness and bringing back the ingredient.

“Say, Kazuma, I'm starting to feel sorry for this penguin. Of course, I still won't let him off.”

“No, actually, do let him off. He's an aristocrat of this country, and from what I know he's been doing a pretty good job...”

And, even though Darkness did suffer at his hands, he only did that in retaliation after

we attacked him to steal the ingredient, so it's not like he's particularly wicked or anything.

Plus, he did agree to our request at first. It's only because we couldn't fulfill his condition that we ended up having to sneak in at night and take the ingredient by force.

...Hold on.

Even if he is a devil, wouldn't that still make us the bad guys?

Just then, the penguin appeared to take notice of me.

"Hey, aren't you the young man who was with Lady Darkness back then? Could you please tell your companion to lay off me? I'm merely an upstanding devil that enjoys the feelings of anguish and humiliation. You seem to know Goddess Eris somehow, so can you please help me out here?"

"I would like to help, but it's not like I can contact her anytime I want."

There is a surefire way for me to meet with her, but that would involve giving up one of my extra lives.

Well, I don't have extra lives in the first place, but...

"Is that so... I quite liked that castle, but it seems like I have no choice but to let it go..."

Watching the penguin depressedly flop down onto the floor, I couldn't help but feel sorry for him.

"So, what do you intend to do from now? Moi would not recommend living in this town. There's a rabid, devil-hating hound that claims this place as her territory, after all."

"I heard that the Succubi have set up shop in this town, so I came to ask if I could be hired as a bouncer or helper. And if a customer with some special tastes show up, with the aid of the Succubi, I'll be able to taste my favourite feelings of anguish and humiliation. I thought it was a good plan, but..."

"I'll immediately exorcise you if I see you in this town."

The penguin recoiled in fear as Aqua thrust her finger at him.

Aqua and Megumin seemed to have something in mind, and approached the penguin from both sides.

“Aqua, there’s a zipper on the back. I really want to see what’s inside.”

“Yeah, you shouldn’t be fooled by his cute appearance. Oh, what’s with this flipper!? Hurry up and show us what’s inside! Otherwise I’ll purify you!”

“Don’t, wait, stop!”

Just as the penguin started scuffling over the zipper with Aqua and Megumin, another knock rapped on the door.

Accompanied by the sound of a bell, the door swung open once more.

“Sorry to disturb you, Wiz, Vanir. I’m sure you’ve heard from Kazuma, but I’m here today to than-... eh?”

The person who entered the store was Darkness.

And next to her was Sylphina, shyly clinging on to her waist.

“Well, well, if it isn’t Lady Dustiness who invaded my castle the other day and made a right mess of things. Hehehe, to think we would meet again like this...”

The Penguin laughed as he turned towards the surprised Darkness.

Blow

“Ahhhh!”

But in doing so, he revealed the zipper on his back, which Aqua immediately unzipped before blowing a puff of air into the opening.

Seems like even the breath of a goddess is harmful to devils.

“W-Why is Lord Zereschrute here?”

In contrast to Darkness's shocked expression, Sylphina's eyes glimmered upon seeing the penguin roll about.

"I'm saying this for your own good, but I think it'll be best if you hurry up and leave this town."

I took pity on the penguin and pulled his zipper up for him.

"Even if you say that, I escaped from my castle in the middle of the night, so I don't have any money nor a place to stay."

The penguin sounded like he was on the verge of tears.

Is he really the same devil that gave off such a final boss feeling back then?

Just then, I felt a tug on my sleeve.

"Young man, is the girl next to Darkness the one you needed the medicine for?"

The penguin cutely tilted his head.

"Yeah. Her name is Sylphina. She's Darkness's daughter."

"Hey, Kazuma, stop saying that she's my daughter... N-No, you're my daughter, Sylphina, so don't make such a face."

Darkness hastily corrected herself after seeing Sylphina's sorrowful look.

Hearing that, the penguin frantically flapped his flippers.

"Oh, it's good to see that she's well! You don't need to be so guarded, Lady Dustiness. As a devil, it's only natural for me to come to blows with a Crusader. I don't hold a grudge over that incident."

"I don't really get it, but if you say so... Still, what are you doing so far from your territory?"

— I explained the circumstances to Darkness.

“...Say, Kazuma, you met with Eris-sama when you died, right? Does she seem like she has a lot of free time on her hands?”

“You’ll receive divine punishment if you say that sort of things. Rather than having free time, it’s more like she’s taking revenge for you.”

Though I’m pretty sure at least fifty percent of it is just because she hates devils.

“I-is that so? Why is Eris-sama keeping such a close eye on me... Still, I’m terribly sorry, Lord Zereschrute. You might be a devil, but it’s not like you’ve done any wicked acts...”

Darkness deeply apologized to the penguin, who had Sylphina’s arms wrapped tightly around his neck.

“No, there’s no need to apologize. Managing a territory is fun, but it’s about time I moved on to something new. But, if you really feel that way, I would appreciate it if you could use the backing of the Dustiness house to allow me to live in this town.”

“Don’t get ahead of yourself just because you’ve helped Darkness’s child. She seems quite attached to you, so I won’t purify you in front of her, but I make no such guarantees if we were to meet on a secluded street somewhere.”

I can’t tell who’s the actual devil now. The penguin, trembling in the face of Aqua’s threats, hid behind me, dragging Sylphina in tow.

His actions may seem cute, but knowing what exactly is hiding inside of that suit, I couldn’t help but get goosebumps.

–Just then,

“Emergency quest! Emergency quest! All adventurers in town, please gather at the guild hall immediately.”

The emergency announcement that I haven’t heard for a long time echoed through the town.

We traded a look.

“Before you say it, I didn’t do anything.”

“Hey, why are you staring at me like that, Kazuma? I don’t know anything about this.”

“I’ve got no idea about this either. I’ve been properly toeing the regulations concerning the locations and usage of Explosion.”

That leaves...

“Hey, don’t look at me. I’m the one who’s the least likely to cause any trouble. That tax collection incident only happened because the guild came to consult me.”

Just as Darkness frantically denied it after everyone’s gaze fell upon her, the voice of the guild lady took on a somewhat joyous tone.

“I repeat, all adventurers within the town, please gather at the guild hall immediately... All adventurers...”

The announcer took a deep breath,

“The Treasure Island has appeared!”

Hearing that, Vanir and Wiz immediately rushed out through the door without even a backwards glance.

No, it’s not just them, even Aqua has vanished from the store before I noticed.

“Hey, what is going on? Explain it- damn, you’re fast!”

I rushed out after the three, only to see them off in the far distance.

“What’s up with them!? Leaving Vanir and Aqua aside, even Wiz ran out like she was possessed.”

“What are you saying, Kazuma? It’s the Treasure Island! It’s a literal island of treasure! We shouldn’t be wasting time here, let’s hurry up and go!”

With her eyes glowing like she really was possessed, Megumin too flew out of the store.

“I-I’ll have to stay here to take care of Sylphina...”

Leaving Darkness who said that and the penguin to take care of the store, I ran out behind Megumin and the others.

On the way to the guild, I ran across many other adventurers who looked just as frantic.

Most of them were armed with pickaxes, carrying a large rucksack and wearing a helmet.

As I neared the guild, I ran into Aqua and the others who dashed out ahead of me.

Aqua had a pickaxe in her hand as well. Was the guild renting them out?

“Kazuma! I picked up a set for you! Come on, let’s head out of town! Hurry!”

Saying that, Aqua handed over a helmet, a rucksack, and a pickaxe to me

Seems like something’s happened outside of town.

“Hey, come on, properly explain it to me already! Just what is a Treasure Island? Judging from the name and your reactions, it seems to be a pretty profitable quest, but...”

I asked Aqua as I chased after her after properly securing the items she handed me.

“Treasure Island is the common name of the genbu. A giant tortoise known as a genbu has appeared outside of town. The genbu spends most of its time underground, and only surfaces once every ten years. It’s said that it rises up to sun its shell in order to rid itself of the mushrooms, parasites, and other harmful creatures that have taken root on its body, but no one knows for sure. What we do know is that it will remain on the surface until the sun goes down. And genbu lives on a diet of precious gems and metals deep underground, and such precious gems and metals will be stuck to its

shell.”

Megumin explained as she ran next to me.

I see, so that’s why everyone’s bringing pickaxes with them.

They are going to use it to dig up the precious metals and gems stuck to the genbu’s shell while it’s up here.

“Isn’t that giant tortoise going to attack the people digging into its shell? And there are already a lot of adventurers who went on ahead of us. Won’t it all be gone by the time we get there?”

In response, Aqua said,

“The Treasure Island is a very docile creature. As long as no one does anything too crazy, it won’t attack people. And there’s no need to worry about all the treasure being gone. Soon, you’ll see why people call it a Treasure Island... Anyway, what is the weird devil doing here? Genbu are divine beasts. Divine beasts are the enemies of devils, you know?”

“If it were up to me, Moi wouldn’t be doing this either! But this useless shopkeeper once again bought some garbage and put us in the red again! If Moi doesn’t do something soon, this month’s rent will be...”

“It’ll be fine, Vanir-san! We might be in the red now, but if I properly raise the goods I bought, I’m sure we’ll end up making a huge profit... s-so don’t look at me like so coldly, you’re scaring me!”

Looks like the store isn’t doing so well. As usual.

A devil and a lich hauling pickaxes to do manual labour in order to repay their debts... it really is tough to live in this world.

Part 4

“...Am I dreaming?”

There's a large hill in front of me.

No, this can be said to be a mountain.

Just outside the gates laid a gigantic creature that could very easily be mistaken for a small mountain.

Its size was comparable to the Tokyo Dome that I saw as a kid.

Lying next to the yawning chasm that the creature probably crawled out of, the beast known as a Treasure Island let out a yawn with its fissure-like mouth as it leisurely laid in the sun.

Yeah, this definitely is worthy of being called a divine beast.

Unlike a certain self-proclaimed divine being that only eats and sleeps all day, this one is far more deserving of the faith of the people.

The Treasure Island was laying down with its legs splayed out.

A large number of adventurers were already crawling all over it, picking away at the rock-like shell with their pickaxes.

Even though there were a lot of people pecking away at its shell, the Treasure Island didn't seem to be angry at all, instead contentedly closing its eyes.

Ropes hung off the top of that rocky mountain, and the adventurers worked their way up, almost as if they were going rock climbing.

...Yeah, I understand what Aqua was saying now.

It's impossible to mine all of this out in less than half a day.

“Let's go, Kazuma! We have until sunset! We are going to dig until our rucksacks are full to bursting!”

Aqua has already climbed up on top of the mountain using one of the ropes.

Perhaps because they were still feeling the pinch from the recent tax collection, the surrounding adventurers were all excitedly digging into the mountain with their pickaxes.

I'm already rich, but even so, I can't just ignore this pile of money that just dropped in front of me.

I don't know how much money I'll make, but it's definitely worth my time.

"Right, now that I'm here, time to put in some effort... Oh, isn't that Dust and the others? They are here too?"

I felt slightly more at ease after seeing a familiar face as I scaled up the mountain.

After climbing up to the top, we started chipping away at a nearby rock formation.

Perhaps because they didn't want to mess up their hair, Aqua and Wiz both went without helmets.

My pickaxe struck a lump of ore and scattered shimmering stones all over the shell.

Just how much is each stone worth?

"...Say, I don't know how much this is worth, but is it really that easy to make money with this? Actually, aren't there only adventurers here? There isn't much danger, so wouldn't it be better to get the citizens out to help too?"

No matter where I looked, the only people I could see were adventurers.

It's just digging through rock. The engineering crew I worked with when I first came into this world would probably be better suited for this task.

Aqua answered my question.

"It's obviously because it's dangerous."

...Huh?

Just then, someone let out a loud scream.

“Aaaah, crap! I dug into a rock mimic!”

Turning towards the source of the sound, I saw an adventurer trying to fend off several squishy, octopus like creatures with a pickaxe.

“H-hey, what is that? Isn’t this bad? Hey guys, should we hurry up and help...?”

Those creatures had rock-like skin that seemed to perfectly blend into their surroundings as they moved.

Ah, I see. Rock mimic.

But Aqua and Wiz were so completely focused on their digging that they didn’t even turn to look at him.

“Leave them alone! Everyone here is an adventurer! They’ve already resolved themselves to die at any moment! Going out there to help him would be to trample all over that resolve!”

“Exactly! Even if they can’t fend them off by themselves, dying on a quest is an honour for an adventurer! And... And my debts...!”



MY DEBTS,
MY DEBTS....!

JUST THEN, A NEARBY
ADVENTURER WAS BEING
ATTACKED BY MONSTERS,
BUT AQUA AND WIZ WERE TOO
FOCUSED ON SWINGING
THEIR PICKAXES TO NOTICE.

WIZ

LET'S GET
TO WORK,
KAZUMA! TIME
IS MONEY!
WE ARE GOING
TO DIG UNTIL
OUR BAGS ARE
BURSTING!

“A-Are you really fine with that? What happened to your humanity?”

Oh, right, these two aren’t humans.

The man who was attacked by the rock mimics cried out.

“Pl-Please help me!”

“...He’s crying out for help, you know? Are you sure you want to leave him alone, you self-proclaimed whatever?”

“Ahahahaha! This is high-quality manatite! And this one is flaretite! I was worried about my lack of pocket money, but I’ll have more than enough after this!”

The self-proclaimed whatever has long since stopped listening to me.

Conversely, the lich that was supposed to be the enemy of humanity seems to not be so heartless as to abandon him to his fate.

“Uuu... I’ll be able to cover rent somehow if I sell my body... don’t worry, I won’t die even if I sell my body... yes, I won’t die...”

While saying some incredible things, Wiz dropped her pickaxe and rushed over to the man.

“Hey, Wiz, just stay here and dig, I’ll go help him in your place!”

Selling your body...

Is she seriously saying that...?

I called after her, but Wiz merely turned around and smiled.

“It’ll be fine, Kazuma-san. A lich’s fingernails and hair have high concentrations of mana. I’ll be able to get quite a bit of money by selling them as materials to the adventurer’s guild.”

“W-Wait, stop. Seriously, stop! That’s what you mean by selling your body? Anyway, all we have to do is to quickly help him out and get back to mining. Hey, Megumin, Aqua, let’s go. It’ll be over in a flash with the four of us here.”

Unfortunately, I didn't have my sword or armor with me.

Armed with only a pickaxe, Megumin and I headed over to the rock mimics.

Seems like the self-proclaimed whatever couldn't just stand by after hearing my words.

"Tsk, just when time is of the essence... You damned rock mimics dare get in my way!? Eat this!"

Aqua screamed as she savagely hacked into the rock mimics with her pickaxe.

A goddess, blinded by greed, mercilessly hacking apart a living creature with a pickaxe.

Now that I'm rich, I can properly appreciate just how terrible the smile of that goddess is.

"Normally Moi would rather puke blood than lend a helping hand to a goddess, but I'll ignore it just this once. Let's just hurry up and get this over with. Vanir-Style Death Ray!"

Just as Aqua savagely finished off a single rock mimic, Vanir, who had been mining away at his own rock pile some distance away, turned around and shot a black beam from his eyes.

A group of rock mimics were hit by the malevolent light and vanished, along with a good chunk of the surrounding rock.

"Hey, if you could've taken care of them so easily, you should've done it from the start!"

"Oh, shut up! This month's rent isn't some kind of joke, it's a matter of life and death! I hope you are satisfied with that, useless shopkeep! Hurry up and clear some of your debts!"

I had some misgivings upon hearing Vanir's uncharacteristically urgent voice.

Vanir is usually composed. It's really rare to see him act like this.

The adventurer who was saved quickly bowed and went back to his work.

I may have a few misgivings, but right now it's best to get back to chipping away at this.

— About half a day has passed since then.

Dragging full rucksacks behind them, Megumin and Aqua came down in front of me who had gotten fed up with digging a long time before they did.

Still, my rucksack is already full of high quality ore.

At dusk, the Treasure Island is no longer a mass of rock. Patches of its original shell are peeking through all over.

The beautiful, pitch-black shell gleamed in the evening sun, tough enough that even a direct hit from a pickaxe wouldn't leave a scratch.

The other adventurers were pretty much satisfied with their haul by now.

All of them gathered quite some distance away to gaze upon the Treasure Island.

The Treasure Island glanced back at us as we gathered near the gate of the town.

It's almost as if it was saying, 'are you really satisfied with that?'

Seeing that, I remembered something that has been weighing on me.

The mass of rock on the summit of its shell is still completely intact.

I'm sure that its shell will shine brilliantly if that piece was removed.

"...Say, Megumin, can you do something for me?"

The uneasiness of leaving something half-done was nagging at me. In order to quell that feeling, I whispered to Megumin.

"...Eeh!? A-Are you sure? Well, I haven't used my Explosion yet today, and it's certainly a suitable target for my one day, one explosion routine..."

Well, there's only really one thing I would turn to Megumin for.

"But are you really sure about this? Treasure Islands are docile creatures, but if you blast one with Explosion, it might just anger it enough to attack. Plus, there's an ironclad rule amongst us adventurers to never attack a Treasure Island..."

I assured the reluctant Megumin.

"Well, it's just my intuition, but the Treasure Island won't get angry. If anything, it'll probably be elated. It'll be fine as long as you follow my instructions and don't hit it directly. So, please, Megumin."

After receiving my encouragement, Megumin reluctantly started preparing to cast her spell.

"I'm not responsible for what happens after this, okay? And even an explosion artisan like me might slip up sometimes."

You're an Archmage, since when did you become an artisan?

As the adventurers gave thanks to the Treasure Island for bringing them that unexpected windfall, Megumin started chanting her spell.

"Eh? Wait, what are you two doing?"

Just as the adventurers were startled by Aqua's words, Megumin completed her spell.

"Explosion!!!"

The bright light that Megumin created exploded just above the Treasure Island, blasting away the mass of rock that stubbornly clung to its summit.

In addition, the small pieces of rock remaining all over its shell were blasted clean by the shockwave.

Is it because of Megumin's aim, or because the Treasure Island is just that tough? Either way, there wasn't a single scratch on the Treasure Island's shell.

Ignoring the other adventures, the Treasure Island fixed its gaze squarely on Megumin who cast the spell, and me who was standing right beside her.

That gaze caused Megumin to squeak a little in fright, but I repeatedly told myself that everything will be fine and simply continued looking at the Treasure Island.

Still, I made preparations to bolt at any moment.

The Treasure Island that hasn't moved for the entire day got up to its feet and stretched, almost as if it just woke up from a nice afternoon nap.

Then, it turned back and walked towards the hole it originally came from.

— The Treasure Island surfaces every ten years to sun its shell.

I'm sure there's some truth in that theory.

But if that's the case, there wouldn't be a need for it to appear near a town.

From what I've heard, the Treasure Island will always surface close to a town.

Yes, almost as if it wishes for humans to clear away the rock that is covering its body.

Wouldn't that be its true purpose, then? To clear away all the rock that is stuck to its shell?

After having all the rocks cleared away from its shell, the Treasure Island started heading back underground even before the sun has completely set.

Then, the Treasure Island looked at Megumin and me one last time and gave his entire body a quick shake.

With that tremor, the trace minerals that were still stuck to its body scattered away into the air.

Seemingly refreshed, the Treasure Island crawled back into its hole with what appeared to be a contented expression.

The colossal, god-like beast gave us one last parting gift.

Megumin and I looked at each other and shared a chuckle.

The sight of the Treasure Island leaving was truly beautiful.

For the first time since I came to this world, I felt like I've witnessed something truly fantasy-like.

“Say, Kazuma, those are payment for Megumin's Explosion, right? Then it's fine for us to pick them up and sell them, right?”

“With this, the debts of the store and the rent will be...”

–My name is Satou Kazuma.

The reason I can't get any proper fantasy-like quest in this world is probably the fault of my companions.

Chapter 2

Divine punishment upon this Harem protagonist!

Part 1

“Kazuma-san, Kazuma san! I have a little favour to ask of you.”

The next morning.

As I was relaxing with a cup of coffee after enjoying a late breakfast, Aqua, who had a shovel-like object slung over her shoulder for some reason, said that to me.

“What is it? I’m not giving you any more pocket money. I already gave you this month’s allowance, and you should’ve made a lot of money with the ore you got from the Treasure Island yesterday.”

“That’s not it. The favour I wanted is for you to lend me your strength as an adventurer.”

My strength as an adventurer?

“You sure are saying some dangerous things early in the morning. Just what are we going up against? Just to let you know, I’ve already resolved to live a leisurely and peaceful life as a rich man. I’m not going to pick a fight with anything dangerous. If you want to go hunt some undead or settle a grudge with a devil, then go put a request up at the guild.”

“I’m not asking you to deal with monsters. I’ve had my fill of dangerous places, and I too would like to live a leisurely life as a rich person.”

This girl really does think just like me.

If she didn’t do stupid stuff all the time, she’d be a great buddy to hang out with.

“For now, can you come out to the yard? I would like you to demonstrate your amazing

powers out there.”

“I don’t really get it, but I’m fine with it as long as it isn’t dangerous. Very well, I’ll demonstrate the hidden power sleeping within me.”

Saying that, I rolled up my sleeves and followed Aqua to the yard.

“Chirp.”

“...You really aren’t growing much at all, huh?”

Chomusuke lazily laid in the yard, and next to it was Emperor Zell, nuzzling against the cat’s soft fur.

Chomusuke has been steadily growing recently, but in contrast, the chick was still as small as it ever was.

They say that the more magic power you have, the slower you’ll grow, so perhaps that’s why.

That black furball used to be wary of Zell, but it seems like they’re getting along fine now.

I originally planned on turning Zell into fried chicken when he grew bigger, but now that they are this close, it’d be a little cruel of me to forcibly tear them apart.

As I was looking at this heartwarming sight, Aqua tugged on my sleeve.

“There’s a plot over there, right? I would like you to scatter plenty of nutrient-rich dirt over it.”

“...You’re asking me to use my power to plow the fields? Me, who could be considered a hero?”

Right where Aqua was pointing, Megumin, dressed in a one piece sundress and a straw hat, was busy working up a sweat with a small gardening trowel in hand.

“You too, Megumin? What, are you two planning on creating a home garden or

something?”

“Oh, Kazuma, you’re finally awake. Look at this fine plot. If you scatter some magically-created dirt over here, we’ll definitely be able to grow some wonderful vegetables.”

While saying something that made her sound like an obaa-chan out in the hicks, Megumin gestured at the dirt by her feet with a smile.

“I always wanted to have a vegetable plot in the yard. We have the space, and vegetables are expensive, after all. We’ll be able to save on household costs, and we’ll also be able to eat fresh vegetables at any time. I’ll let you taste some tasty vegetable curry once it’s done.”

“Well, I’m happy about that and all, but... Is it fine for us amateurs to grow vegetables? They won’t fly around and attack people like cabbages, will they?”

Hearing my words, Aqua and Megumin averted their gazes.

“...You can’t just grow vegetables as you wish, right? You need some kind of permit or something, right?! Actually, where’s Darkness? She’s part of the government, that’s why you guys waited till she’s out to do this, right?!”

“Calm down, Kazuma. Sure, you do need some qualifications to grow vegetables, but high-level adventurers are allowed to start a vegetable garden at home. It’s a special privilege. And we are high-level adventurers, so there’s no issue.”

“Exactly. My level is already above forty. A home garden or two is acceptable for me.”

When did her level get that high?

It was supposed to be easy to level as an Adventurer, so how am I the only one whose level is still in the teens?

“It’s a little surprising that Megumin’s level is that high, but there you have it. So, I would like you to create some nutrient-rich earth for the plot. I know you like using Create Earth to blind others or create mud for use as a prank, but this is what it’s originally supposed to be used for.”

“Come to think of it, I have heard something like that before. Oh, what the hell, Create Earth.”

I walked down the plot and started scattering the earth I created into it.

Aqua and Megumin followed behind me and started planting seeds.

“Just to be sure, what seeds are you planting?”

I got a sudden sense of unease and asked, and Aqua responded in a carefree tone.

“Komatsuna, potatoes, radishes, bell peppers, mackerel, and spinach. That farmer oji-san said that those vegetables grow well around here in this season.”

<TL Note: Komatsuna, Japanese mustard spinach.>

...

“...Say, was there something weird mixed in there just now?”

“Oh, you’re wondering why we are planting summer vegetables even though it’s almost winter, right? But this isn’t Japan. Vegetables are overflowing with vitality, so they’ll grow well even in winter.”

No, that’s not it, there’s something in there that isn’t a vegetable.

“...Phew. Finally, the sowing is done. I think we did pretty well. All we need to do now is regularly water them and give them a little massage here and there, and they’ll be ripe for harvesting by winter.”

“Hey, did you just say massage just now? We are growing vegetables here, right? We aren’t actually raising cattle or something, right?”

Ignoring my constant nitpicks, Aqua let out a contented sigh.

“We’re only planting some easily-cared-for vegetables right now, but we’ll definitely take on some tougher vegetables next year!”

“Yeah, let’s plant some cabbages or tomatoes in the spring, or even a mandrake or two next year!”



“I can’t ignore that! You said mandrake just now, right?! You want to plant a mandrake here?!”

Mandrakes are dangerous plants that scream when harvested and can cause anyone who hear their screams to die.

Just as we were fussing over that, someone appeared at the door.

That person milled about, seemingly hesitant to knock...

“Why are you turning back now after coming all the way to someone else’s house?!”

“Me-Megumin?! What are you doing out here?”

That person was Yunyun.

She was about to turn back without knocking when Megumin surprised her.

“I visited unannounced just yesterday, so it’d be pretty awkward to visit again so soon. I was thinking that it’d be better to wait a few days before coming again...”

“It’s fine to visit everyday if you are free! Why do you keep worrying about all those little details?! Anyway, you probably came here for a reason, right?”

Hearing Megumin’s words, Yunyun, who had a basket full of what appeared to be pastries in her hand, said,

“C-Can I really visit every day? Will you really not find me annoying? You won’t suddenly stop talking upon hearing that I’ve come to visit...”

“I don’t care about that! If anything, your current attitude is more annoying! Anyway, hurry up and get to the point!”

Facing the short-tempered Megumin,

“Actually, about that chieftain’s trial I talked about before...”

“— So, basically, the trial to decide the next chief of the Crimson Demons needs to be

undertaken together with a partner, right?”

“Yes. In the past, the prospective chieftains would usually undertake the trial with an outsider swordsman as a vanguard, but... Well, Crimson Demons are stronger than any swordsman. Eventually, they realized that with two Crimson Demons as a team, they could just blow through the trial with pure firepower without caring about vanguard or backline positions.”

Crimson Demons really don't care the slightest about romance.

Normally, it'd only be proper for a Crimson Demon to leave the village in search of a suitable partner for the trial, and the two of them will slowly fall in love over the course of the journey. That's the proper way for this to develop.

Megumin, who had been listening intently, heaved a deep sigh.

“So, you couldn't find anyone else, so you came to invite me, huh?... You really are hopeless. Very well then, let me show you my power!”

Megumin confidently declared, only barely hiding her smile.

“Eh? No, you won't be of any help if you come along. You'll just become a hindrance after a single blast. There are three stages to the trial, you know?”

Yunyun said such unexpectedly harsh words to her, causing her to stiffen up.

“Well, I agree with your assessment, but if that's the case, why did you come here?”

“T-That's...”

After I said that, Yunyun nervously looked down and tightly gripped the hem of her skirt.

“Actually, I have a friend... guy... no, an adventurer acquaintance who would be suitable for a vanguard, but when I asked him, he went ‘Huh? I made a whole ton of money off the Treasure Island, so I don't think I'll work for awhile. Well, if you can introduce me to a busty Crimson Demon onee-san, I wouldn't mind helping you’, and other such horrible things...”

“I don't know who that is, but he doesn't sound like a decent person. It's best not to

associate with such people, otherwise folks will start thinking that you're birds of a feather."

"No, it's more like we just happen to run into each other a lot, or more like someone who frequents the same store that I do..."

With a troubled expression, Yunyun raised her head with a determined glare.

"Umm, Kazuma-san! Would you accompany me to the Crimson Demon village and undertake the trial- Ow, ow, ow! What are you doing, Megumin!?"

Megumin suddenly started pulling on Yunyun's pigtails in a fit.

"What am I doing?! What are you doing?! How could I possibly keep letting you use Kazuma as you please?! There's no need to bother Kazuma with this! It's just the trial of the Crimson Demons! I'll be able to handle it!"

Saying that, she lifted the magic staff she placed by her side.

"Hey, Megumin, to be honest, if you come with me, it'll just be a bother-"

"You can really say some mean things when you want to, huh?!"

Her eyes glowing bright red, Megumin looked over to me-

"I'm a high-level Crimson Demon! I'll be a much better vanguard than a low-level swordsman like him! It's just a few monsters, I'll smash all of them up with my manatite staff! Right, Kazuma, I'll be leaving the house for a while!"

Having thrown away even her identity as a mage, Megumin confidently declared as she twirled her staff around.

Part 2

“Well then, I’ll be out of town for a while, so don’t do anything stupid while I’m away, okay?”

“Did you get the mistaken impression that you’ve become a sensible person recently? To tell you the truth, the most problematic person in this town might actually be you instead of Aqua.”

Next morning.

After flattering herself in such a way that made us all concerned for her, Megumin turned to Darkness and said,

“Darkness, please keep an eye on those two for me while I’m out. Apart from a heightened sex drive, you’re pretty normal, so please make sure that Aqua doesn’t do something stupid and Kazuma doesn’t do something suicidal.”

“D-Don’t say that I have a heightened sex drive! Megumin too, you have the shortest temper in this town, so take care not to pick a fight with anyone you come across. I’ll keep an eye on Kazuma and make sure he doesn’t start following any random pretty girls that show up.”

Hey, why does it seem like I’m the least trusted person amongst all of them?

“You are the one that gives me the most worries when it comes to the topic of women, but... Oh well. You two are the kind of people who chicken out when it actually happens, after all. Aqua, please keep an eye on them and make sure they don’t get up to anything inappropriate.”

“I got it. It’s a little early for them to start having children. If I hear any strange noises, I’ll make sure to remind them to take proper precautions.”

“You don’t get it at all! Ah, just make sure not to leave those two alone.”

Just how exactly do these guys see me?

“Hey, I know how to control myself, you know? I did properly reject Darkness instead of becoming the captain of two boats.”

“Oh, yeah, I suppose you did properly reject Darkness. Sorry, I should have a little more trust in you.”

“...Step out into the yard, I’ll teach you two a lesson.”

Averting her gaze from Darkness who was nursing a fist, Megumin waved to us.

“Well then, I’m off to blow right through that trial back in the Crimson Demon village. Please behave yourself while I’m gone.”

Saying that, she left the house with a smile.

“Right, now that Megumin is gone, lets settle the division of chores. She said she’ll be back in a few days, but we should still properly settle this.”

After Megumin left, we discussed our future plans.

“I’m getting pretty tired of being put on toilet duty all the time. Please give me some cooking duties or the like.”

“No, every time you cook, you end up wasting most of the ingredients. You always end up turning a few bottles of seasonings into water. It’s too wasteful.”

Hmm.

“Then I’ll handle cooking. Darkness’s cooking is pretty plain, and Aqua’s out of the question. In return, Darkness will handle the cleaning, and Aqua will handle the toilets and the baths.”

“S-Say, is my cooking really that plain? I thought I’d have at least have a certain level of cooking skill...”

“Why am I always in charge of the toilets!? And isn’t it a little unfair to be only in charge of the cooking? We’ve got a new vegetable plot to take care of now, so you should at least help a little!”

Both of them raised objections to my proposal, and Darkness suddenly noticed.

“Vegetable plot? Hey, Aqua, why is this the first time I’ve heard about it? Did you make a plot in the yard!? It’s illegal for an amateur to grow vegetables, you know!?”

“You look pretty intelligent, but you are actually surprisingly dumb, aren’t you, Darkness? High-level adventurers are an exception to that law! Come on, take a look at my adventurer’s card! Now, lend me a hand! I’ll give you a few delicious vegetables too!”

Aqua proudly flashed her card in front of Darkness, before grabbing a bunch of farming tools and heading to the yard.

“Wait, Aqua, I have a really bad feeling about this, so please stop this home garden project! The only thing I can see down that road is our vegetables causing trouble for our neighbours!”

‘Growing vegetables at home will lead to causing trouble for others.’ This isn’t a concept you often come across in Japan.

Looking at Darkness chase after Aqua out of the corner of my eye, I grabbed the newspaper out of the postbox and collapsed onto the sofa.

“...Hmm?”

There was a concerning headline on the newspaper I just opened.

New movements from the Demon King’s Army! Are they feeling the pinch after losing so many Generals?

We were heavily involved in reducing the number of Generals.

What do they mean by new movements? They didn’t place me on the top of their most wanted list or anything, did they?

I just want to live my new life peacefully as a rich man.

I understand if they feel threatened by me, but I would really like them to just let me be.

“That said, trouble always has a way of flinging itself at my door... *Sigh*, being a hero sure is tough.”

Suddenly, I noticed Chomusuke staring at me.

...Everyone went out, so I thought I was alone in the house.

It may be just a cat, but it's still embarrassing to have someone hear me talking to myself. I flipped the page of the newspaper to hide my embarrassment...

"...Hah!?"

My name was printed on the next page.

Oh, yeah, come to think of it, Megumin and I went to a newspaper to demand that they run a special feature on us back when we were living in the capital, didn't we?

We used both the power of the Crimson Demons and the authority of the Dustiness family, and it looks like that article finally got published.

"Oho, 'Exploring the mystery of the strongest of the weakest job, Satou Kazuma: The man who defeated countless high bounty monsters and Demon King's Generals despite having the job of Adventurer'. Chomusuke, take a look. This is a newspaper. It's a really big deal for your name to appear on it. Hey, don't use it as a scratching post!"

After hastily lifting Chomusuke onto my lap to prevent her from destroying my newspaper, I went back to reading the article.

There were various things written about our party.

I'm described as the mysterious adventurer who, despite having the weakest job and being based out of the beginner's town of Axel, has somehow managed to take down many high bounty targets and Generals of the Demon King's Army.

An adventurer capable of using many different skills, with deep ties with both the nobility and the Crimson Demons.

Blessed with both riches and authority, strength and wisdom, and most of all, luck, he is definitely an adventurer to keep an eye on.

"Aqua! Aqua! Come over here quick! Take a look at... Wait, hold on."

I started to call Aqua who was quarreling about something with Darkness in the yard,

but I reconsidered after reading further on.

I was praised quite highly in the article, but I wasn't the only one mentioned.

'Of course, Satou Kazuma is not the only amazing one in the party. First off, there's the beautiful Archmage who is capable of using the strongest offensive spell known to humans, Explosion. Secondly, there's the gorgeous Crusader from the noble house famed for their resilience, Lady Dustiness. And lastly, there's the mysterious and beautiful blue-haired Archpriest.'

"Right, these beautiful girls they are referring to are..."

Well, true, they are beautiful to look at.

Plus, my introduction was a little exaggerated as well.

'The tough Crusader with strong attack power serves as the vanguard, and the Crimson Demon Archmage who can teleport them away in the event that things go south brings the firepower, and lastly, the rare and versatile Archpriest is in charge of support... With the Adventurer providing some kind of help from the backline, it truly is a wonderfully balanced party composition... '

"Hey, this is a little off."

Reading further on, Megumin's, Darkness's, and Aqua's achievements were valued very highly, but not much were written about my accomplishments.

They are treating me like some kind of commander or manager.

Well, they aren't wrong, but it still makes me feel a little depressed...

They'll probably end up rubbing it in my face, so I think I'll pass on showing them today's newspaper.

Still...

"Please don't come all the way out to the frontiers to hunt me down. As long as you don't pick a fight with me, I won't cause any trouble for you."

I cast a lingering glance at the headline '**New movements from the Demon King's**

Army', before rolling up the newspaper.

— After completing her work in the yard,

“Let’s go on an extermination quest!”

Aqua enthusiastically declared while we were having dinner, sauce dripping off her cheeks like whiskers.

What’s gotten into her?

She didn’t awaken to the joys of being an adventurer back during the Treasure Island incident, did she?

“Killing monsters is the job of adventurers, so I don’t mind, but is it really okay with just us? Shouldn’t we wait for Megumin to come back?”

Darkness said while elegantly sipping tea.

“That’s exactly it! Megumin is in our party. Of course, that’s a good thing, but I just recently noticed something. Because Megumin usually deals the finishing blow, our levels barely rise. Of course, I’m already perfect, so my level going up wouldn’t mean much, but still, I’m like the figurehead of this party. If I’m not the highest leveled person in it, our reputation would suffer, wouldn’t it?”

“I don’t know when you became our party’s figurehead, but, yeah, I would like to raise my level too.”

Actually, other than me, everyone else has already leveled to the twenties and thirties.

I’ve been eating high quality ingredients worth plenty of experience points, so why is there such a large difference in our levels?

“I occasionally exorcise the ghosts at the cemetery together with Darkness, but it seems like stray ghosts just won’t cut it. They aren’t worth much experience points at all. So, let’s take this chance to gain a ton of levels. It’ll surely surprise Megumin when she gets back.”

“Megumin might throw a fit if she finds out we had an adventure without her, you know?... Still, she’s off in the Crimson Demon village undergoing some trial or the other right now, and it’d be bad if the gap in our levels continues to widen any further...”

Darkness seemed quite bothered by it, but, whether in stats or job or level, I’m in the worst position in this entire party.

However...

“It’s fine to talk about closing the gap in our levels, but how exactly do you plan on doing so? The only one who gains any experience points is the one who deals the finishing blow, right? Neither of you have any methods of attack.”

Darkness can’t land any of her attacks, and Aqua can only attack undead and devils.

In response to my doubts, Aqua flared her nostrils-

“Don’t worry, I have a plan. Just leave it to me!”

And said that with a confident smile on her face.

I can’t help but get a bad feeling about this.

Part 3

Aqua peeked her head out from a back alley in Axel.

“...I found it. Is everyone ready?”

I originally thought that Aqua wanted to hunt monsters outside the city, but her target was instead very close by.

“H-Hey, Aqua, you’re not going to...”

Darkness, who, like me, thought that we were headed out of the city and was thus in full armour, raised a puzzled voice.

“First, I’ll stop his movements with my attacks. Then, Kazuma, use Bind on him. Once he is immobile, we’ll surround it and beat it up.”

“A-Are you really a Priest?”

I softly grumbled to Aqua.

No, maybe it’s precisely because she’s a Priest.

Yes, Aqua’s target is...

“Oh, if it isn’t the acquaintances of Lady Dustiness. What a coinciden-.”

“GOD BLOW!”

The penguin who was sweeping up dust in front of Wiz’s store collapsed weightlessly to the ground after receiving Aqua’s fist.

Judging from the sound it made when it hit the floor, it seems like the contents were erased yet again.

“Hey, penguin, get a hold of yourself! Vanir, are you here!? Your friend lost his life again!”

I called out into the store, and Vanir hurriedly rushed out.

“You accursed woman! Do you not feel content without making trouble at my store every day?!”

“Everytime you revive this pen-pen, one of your lives will be lost as well, right? Then that’s perfect. My boundless divine energy provided to me by my followers or your extra lives that are barely worth 30 eris each, I wonder which of them will be used up first?”

As Vanir breathed into the penguin, trying to resuscitate him, Darkness moved to stop Aqua.

“Hey, Aqua, don’t tell me the leveling target you were talking about is...”

“Of course, I’m talking about this pen-pen. He’s weak enough that I can easily vanquish him with a single blow, but I gained a level when I last defeated him. That means that he is worth a lot of experience points. So we’re using him to increase our levels!”

“Pii!”

The resurrected penguin screamed as he heard Aqua’s words.

“-P-Please have some tea.”

Aqua strutted into the store after that, and the penguin timidly brought out tea for her.

The flippers that were sewn back on were trembling.

That was probably back from when Chris cut it off with her dagger.

Looking at that and his current state, I can’t help but feel a sense of guilt.

After receiving the tea from the penguin, Aqua took a small sip.

“...You sure have some guts to serve me hot water as tea.”

“W-Wha!? I’m pretty sure I served tea... I-I’ll go rebrew it.”

“There’s no need to put on another pot, Zereschrute! She’s just messing with you!”

After being picked on by Aqua and reprimanded by Vanir, the penguin dropped his shoulders and walked over to me.

“Young man, I may be a devil, but even devils can get depressed. Might you listen to a few grumbles of mine...”

“Seriously, it will really be best for you to get out of this town.”

As I tried to comfort the penguin, Darkness, who was looking around the shop, said,

“By the way, I don’t see Wiz around. Did she go somewhere?”

“If you are talking about that delusional shopkeeper, she started talking about strange things like feeling the presence of a challenger and the like after Moi had her work ceaselessly for a week. That doesn’t look good, and we’re in the black after that Treasure Island incident, so Moi had her resting in the back.”

Is Wiz approaching her limit?

“By the way, young man, why did you come here today?”

“Ah.”

I remembered after hearing the penguin’s words.

Yeah, we’re here because of Aqua’s level increasing scheme...

I averted my gaze from the penguin who was looking blankly at me, and took Darkness and Aqua over to a corner of the shop to have a discussion.

“Hey, do you really intend to raise your level by repeatedly defeating that penguin? The friends I made back in the Crimson Demon village recommended a technique to quickly level by finishing off immobile monsters, and this feels just as unpleasant.”

“It’s really annoying that it looks so cute. Even if it is a devil, hearing him repeatedly scream does tug at my heartstrings. And here I thought it was a great idea. What should we do now?”

“Why don’t we just raise our levels like normal? Megumin isn’t here, but we should have raised our skills quite a bit by now. It’s a great chance for us. Normally, we would

just let Megumin wipe out the monsters and call it a day right then.”

Hmm, can we really defeat monsters and level up normally with this party?

Come to think of it, while I had set out with Aqua and Megumin at one point, I’ve never tried fighting with just Aqua and Darkness.

“Right, let’s get some practice so we can perform a little better after Megumin’s exhausted her mana.”

Hearing my adventurer-sounding declaration, the two of them nodded.

Part 4

Aqua ended up losing her temper and purifying the penguin again after Vanir shouted 'so what did you come here for' at us. Well, a lot of things happened, but eventually we left town and came to the plains.

"Frogs! Today is the day we take revenge on the frogs!"

"No, I don't wanna! I can't see frogs as anything other than my natural enemy!"

Perhaps because she remembered her past trauma, Aqua strongly protested and put us once again in the position of deciding which monster to hunt.

"But, Aqua, considering our combat strength, hunting frogs would be the best course of action for us... I'm wearing metal armour, so the frogs won't eat me. This way, we'll be able to avoid getting wiped."

"That means that the frogs will definitely go after me! I have the ability to learn, you know? This will definitely end with me taking another dip inside a frog's stomach!"

It's only a little, but this girl has recently started being able to learn from past experience.

Even though her intelligence is already maxed out and shouldn't grow with her level...

Is this what growing up means?

Seeing Aqua mature like this makes me feel a little happy, so I decided to support her.

"Fine, let's choose another monster. How about going to the forest a little further away from town? Right now, there should be a lot of monsters that are stocking up in preparation for hibernation. If we go into the forest, I'm sure we'll be able to catch them while they are eating-"

"No, I don't wanna! There are a lot of bug type monsters in the forest. They'll definitely be attracted by my beautiful aroma and make a beeline for me."

Aqua made herself sound like some kind of insect-attracting flower, but, well, it was fairly likely for that to happen.

After listening to Aqua's words, Darkness thought for a while before slamming her fist into her palm.

"Then how about this? There was that lake that Aqua purified before, right? The crocodiles that were deprived of their habitat should have moved to the nearby wetlands. They should still be near to the lake, so why don't we go hunt them down and finish off the request from back then..."

"No, I don't wanna! You say that, but it'll just end up with me purifying the wetlands in order to draw out the monsters, right? In that case, the one who ends up attracting all the attention would be me! So I definitely don't want to go back there!"

...

"Hey, I feel like it's starting to get cold, and there doesn't seem to be any leveling method more efficient than taking down that penguin. This is getting more and more troublesome."

"Oh, you get it too, right? Sounds like Kazuma is getting tired of this too. Then, why don't we call it a day for today and buy some ingredients for a hot pot on the way back?"

After making a pretty appealing suggestion, Aqua moved to leave before being dragged back by Darkness. Seeing that, I made an executive decision.

"Right, let's just go with the frogs. Darkness, just bring her over to the general area."

"I got it, I'll be leaving the attacking to you. Well, against such huge frogs, even I might occasionally land a hit or two, so look forward to it."

Only occasionally land a hit or two? Even against a giant frog?

"Nooooo! Why is this happening? This isn't like you at all, Kazuma-san! Normally you would've happily agreed with me after I made such a lazy-sounding suggestion!"

"S-Shut up! Don't think I'm a man who just lazes around all day! I'm a man who will get things done when he wants to! Stop grumbling and come along!"

Dragging Aqua who was crying and raising a fuss, I surveyed my surroundings-

“Kazuma is acting really strange recently! It’s abnormal! It’s like a long time NEET finally got the courage to go to work, and after receiving a little bit of praise on the first day, gets overconfident and starts thinking of himself as a man who get things done! Where did you get that baseless confidence from!? Is it because you kissed Darkness!? Did you cross the precipice of adulthood because you got kissed!?”

“S-Shut up, Aqua! Please forget about that already! And you, don’t steal glances at me like that! Actually, Kazuma, I can’t see any frogs at all!”

Perhaps remembering what happened when she kissed me, Darkness became flustered.

What Aqua pointed out isn’t completely wrong, but there’s a different reason for my confidence.

Yes, that would be the article in today’s newspaper.

How could the amazing Satou-san who received such fine praise give up just because it was a little troublesome? That would be a disappointment to his fans all over the nation, as well as an insult to all those bearing the name Satou who were working hard back in Japan.

I took out my bow.

“Right, Darkness, first, I’ll use my dynamite knock-off to wake up the frogs in the area. Then, you’ll use Decoy to draw the frogs over to you. They’ll gather around you at first, but once they realize that you’re wearing metal armour, they’ll start seeking another target. Their next target should be me, but I’ll take them out with my bow before they reach me.”

Saying that, I showed a confident smile to Darkness.

“S-Sure... What’s up with you today? You’re surprisingly bursting with confidence! It’s like a long time virgin entering an adult shop for the first time and, after receiving a little bit of praise, gets overconfident and starts thinking of himself as a man who can get things done...”

“Shut up! What’s up with you two?! Is it really unusual for me show some confidence?! Dammit, even if Megumin isn’t here to fawn over me, I’ll show you that I’m a man who gets things done! Tinder!”

I took out the dynamite knock off and threw it off into the distance.

The lighter I made was still a little unreliable due to it being handmade, so I decided to use Tinder to light the fuse.

I definitely wouldn't be able to use this item if Megumin were here, but even after she told me to throw them out, I still continued making them in secret.

Seeing my actions, Aqua squatted down, covered her ears and closed her eyes.

A small boom resonated throughout the fields outside of Axel.

At the same time, the ground started rumbling and familiar creatures started to appear.

"Right, they're here, Kazuma! The... frogs..."

No, there are definitely frogs there.

But it's not just one or two frogs-

"Kazuma! Why are there so many frogs!? And why are they all looking at me!? What's up with this!?"

Aqua wailed, her arm firmly in the grasp of Darkness.

Come on, even if you ask me...

"I told you! I definitely told you! This is why I didn't want to deal with frogs! These frogs are definitely the creations of devils! Evil creatures they created to take on a goddess like me! WAAAAH! This is why I wanted to go home~!"

"Shut up! If you don't want to die, stop crying and start casting some support magic on us! Anyway, it's really strange for so many of them to appear! They didn't appear because your bad luck drew them to us, right?"

The frogs are acting very different today. It might be because they were starving, but they rushed over to us.

Seeing that, Darkness seemed to have thought of something and said,

“Hey, Kazuma, this is probably because of the Treasure Island! These frogs must have hidden themselves underground in fear of the mana of that divine beast. They must be so afraid of the Treasure Island that they would rather starve themselves than surface, but your magic item woke all of them up.”

“Apologize! Apologize for blaming it on my bad luck! This whole thing is your idea this time, so take responsibility and do something!”

Aqua started hassling me after hearing Darkness’s explanation.

“I didn’t expect a single stick of dynamite to attract such large numbers! But I’ll apologize for suspecting you! I’m sorry, so accept your fate and get eaten together! Darkness will survive, so she can save us later!”

“Nooo! I don’t want to get covered in slime anymore! I don’t want to smell of fish or be defiled anymore~!”

“Fuhahaha! Bring it!”

Facing the fast approaching horde of frogs, I once again realized that this party is only fully operational if all of its members are gathered.

Part 5

"Sob... sob... I don't want to go outside anymore... I'll stay inside for the entire winter..."

Aqua whined as she dripped slime on the carpet.

I would like to take a bath too, but I'll let Aqua go first today.

After all, Aqua did get swallowed by frog after frog almost as soon as Darkness cut her out from one.

For some reason, the frogs seemed to prefer Aqua over me.

It's probably due to our difference in luck, but even so, I'm a little more inclined to believe Aqua's words when she says that frogs are the natural enemies of gods.

I grabbed the unsteady Aqua's hand and brought her to the bath.

"Come on, I'll heat up the water for you, so go ahead. I'll wash up later."

"Sob... This whole thing happened because you woke them up with your dynamite, but I really hate myself for forgiving you just because you showed me a bit of kindness..."

I pushed Aqua who was obediently following me into the bathroom, before pouring mana into the heater.

Afterwards, while still covered in slime, I waited for Darkness to return after reporting the extermination.

"I'm back."

Darkness, who was safe because of her metal armour, stared intently at me after bringing back the rewards from the sale of the frog meat and the extermination of the frogs.

"Thanks. Please wait a while if you want to use the bath, I would like to go in after Aqua's done... What's wrong? Why are you staring at me like that..."

“N-no, it’s nothing. I was just wondering how it feels to be eaten by a frog after seeing everyone get eaten...”

I thought she was getting better as of late, but it seems like she will always be a masochist at her core.

“Welcome back, Darkness~ The bath is free, Kazuma~. Try not to drink the bathwater I left behind. It might be clean after I’ve purified it, but you might still get a stomach ache if you swallow any leftover frog bits.”

Having left the bath, Aqua walked over barefoot while dressed in her pajamas.

“Just what kind of man do you think I am, you slimy bitch? I’m still covered in slime, so if you don’t want to be forced to take another bath, you better apologize right now.”

“I’m sorry, Kazuma. I really don’t want to get slimed again, so please forgive me.”

Leaving Aqua who quickly prostrated herself before me, I hurried to the bath.

— After washing away the slime covering my body, I let out a sigh as I soaked.

It felt like I went through a lot of things, but it’s barely been a day since Megumin left on her trip.

It should’ve been easier for me with one less problem child to look after, so how is it that I encountered something so horrible and ended up so worn out?

I sensed someone standing outside the bath.

“Say, Kazuma, I’m quite tired, so I think I’ll skip dinner today. In place of that, I’ll help myself to some snacks and wine, okay?”

“Hey, by snacks, you’re not referring to the precious caviar I’ve been keeping, are you? I got that from a strange butler who mixed everything into miso soup back when I was living in the capital!”

I shouted towards Aqua who called out from behind the door, but she simply hummed a song and left.

I thought about pursuing her while still naked, but she isn't the only one who's tired.

I closed my eyes and soaked myself up to the shoulders-

How long have I been asleep?

When I came to, the lamp was out, and it has gotten dark outside.

The water in the tub has also become lukewarm. Looks like I was out for quite some time.

In other words, I was really that tired.

Then...

"Megumin really helped us out a lot..."

We struggled against a horde of frogs today, but if Megumin were here, she would've taken them all out in an instant.

Come to think of it, I only noticed Darkness's importance back when she was about to be married off to that Alderp guy.

That means, the girl who's currently stealing my precious snacks and constantly brings trouble every day is also-

"Nah, that's definitely not possible-"

In the darkened bathroom, I started mumbling to myself.

Well, I suppose her skills in healing magic are worthy of praise...

And she's also very effective when fighting devils and undead.

Actually, her ability to repeatedly revive people without issues could be said to be a cheat-like ability...

"No, wait, if she weren't here, I would've gotten some proper divine treasures or

abilities and wouldn't have died in the first place..."

Well, it'll be best to leave it at that.

I'll probably cry if I say it out loud.

Plus, after living so long in this idiotic world-

Yeah, it isn't too bad.

Just as I thought that.

I heard the sound of a door opening.

Now that the lamp has gone out in the bath, no one would think that it would still be occupied.

Aqua has already taken a bath, and Megumin is in the Crimson Demon village.

That leaves-

I remembered what happened back then as I listened to the slipping sounds of someone undressing.

I was in the bath just like this when I ordered the succubus service for the first time.

It's the exact same situation.

The lamp was blown out by chance, and I fell asleep in the bath.

I thought it was a dream back then, but now I'm deadly certain that this is reality.

Through the glass door that separates the changing room and the bath, I saw a white silhouette.

It's totally a repeat of that night.

The glass door opened, and the person who came in is, of course, Darkness.

Darkness seemed a little bigger in certain places than what I remembered, and the moment her gaze met mine-

“Kyaaaa!”

A high pitched scream echoed throughout the bathroom.

“—W-W-What are you thinking!? Why are you screaming instead of me? Isn’t this odd?”

Darkness frantically rushed over to my side and covered my mouth to block out my scream.

Yes, the one who screamed was me.

I was the one who screamed.

I pushed away Darkness’s hand.

“I’m not going to be treated as a sexual offender because I happen to chance upon this situation! I firmly believe that if a man stumbles onto this kind of situation by accident, the woman has no right to be angry! I’m the one who was here first! If our sexes were reversed, you’d be the one branded as a sexual offender! Why must the blame always fall upon the guy!? This world is the one that’s screwed up!”

“I-I get it, you aren’t at fault! I didn’t have any intention to blame you in the first place-”

I ignored Darkness who was frantically trying to say something and continued,

“In the first place, why is a woman’s word enough to brand a man as a sexual offender!? Isn’t that odd!? If we were on a train together and you touched my butt, even if I raised a fuss about you being a pervert, no one would even raise an eyebrow!”

“Hey, wait, why would I touch your butt... what’s a train in the first place?”

I steadily got angry as I continued speaking.

Yes, the world is screwed up.

If you really care about gender equality, sexual offenders shouldn’t just be determined by the word of a woman, even the word of a man should be trusted for that!

“When I become prime minister, I’ll arrest both men and women equally! I’ll definitely not allow false charges! Cameras will be placed in all carriages, and anyone who makes false charges will be severely punished!”

“O-Okay, I get it, so please just quiet down a little! What would you do if Aqua comes to investigate!? Actually, what are you even saying!? I’m not following you in the slightest!”

Darkness seemed on the verge of tears as she made a shushing sound with her finger to her lips, but I couldn’t care less!

“But if the pervert is a beautiful lady, there wouldn’t be a crime unless the other party reports it! When I go back to Japan, I plan to run for office with that as my platform-!”

And after I worked myself up so far, I finally noticed Darkness’s appearance.

She is mostly naked, but she still had a bikini-like outfit on her.

On top of that, she wore a large towel, and was holding a smaller towel meant for washing up in her hand.

Perhaps because she noticed my gaze, Darkness blushed bright red and, with an embarrassed expression, said in a soft voice,

“...I thought I would wash your back...”



Part 6

The sound of dripping water could be heard in the dark bathroom.

“Ooh...”

“Kazuma...”

It created a different sort of atmosphere than the rowdy one we usually have.

“D-Darkness, p-please focus on this part next...”

“I-I got it... but Kazuma, umm...”

Darkness, who has been blushing red ever since just now, stuttered. She’s probably affected by the unusual atmosphere too.

“*Pant, Pant...* Darkness, I, I can’t...”

“Kazuma, I can’t take it anymore, this is...”

With a scream, Darkness finally-

“What are you making such lewd noises when I’m just washing your back!? You are making it sound like we are doing something obscene!”

Flung the towel she was using to wash my back onto the back of my head.

I took the towel and started cleaning up my front.

“I can’t help it. I thought it was a dream the last time you washed my back, so I didn’t get the chance to properly enjoy it.”

Thinking back, I really wasted that opportunity back then.

I thought it was a dream that I could view at any time, so I rushed her to move on to

the next step.

“That’s scary in its own way. Does that mean you act boldly and do whatever you want to me in your dreams?”

Darkness mumbled as she poured water on my back to wash off the soap.

“Of course, it’s my dream, after all. Did you know? In a dream, no matter what kind of extreme situations you experience, it won’t run afoul of laws or copyrights. A woman I highly respect said that.”

“Who the hell told you such stupid things!?”

Darkness angrily poured warm water down my head.

“Seriously, I’ve been concerned about the company you keep for quite some time. Who is this highly-respected woman? This is the first time I heard that you had such a friend.”

“She’s a gentle woman who is above you in both personality and body.”

“That isn’t something you should boldly say when a man and a woman are alone together!”

It’s disrespectful to even compare that person with Darkness.

Obviously, the person I’m referring to is one of the wonderful succubi who tirelessly provide sweet dreams to comfort the lonely adventurers in the town of Axel everyday, reducing the crime rate in the process.

“Anyway, what made you think of offering this service in the first place? You’re not seeking some more allowance like Aqua, right? How much money do I have to pay for this service in the future?”

“Hey, I worked up a lot of courage to do this. Don’t call it a service. This is just thanks for saving Sylphina. I already properly thanked Megumin, Aqua, Vanir, Wiz, and the other adventurers, but I haven’t properly thanked you yet, so...”

After saying that, Darkness dumped a basin of water over her head, as if to cool down her blushing face and overheating brain.

“That’s cold! Can you step further away before splashing water on yourself!? Unlike you, I don’t like getting splashed with cold water after soaking in a warm bath!”

“I don’t act like that 24/7, you know!? It’s because you keep saying stuff that makes people embarrassed!”

Saying that, she moved in front of me with her head kept low.

“H-Hey, are you serious? How far do you intend to go? Is it really okay not to pay an extra fee for this?”

“Just shut up already! Ah, come on, make sure you properly secure that towel. This isn’t like one of Aqua’s jokes, you hear? I’ll wash your body thoroughly, so stay still.”

With her gaze averted, Darkness started scrubbing my chest.

“Okay, okay, I get it. We’ve known each other for some time, after all. I know you’re not entirely satisfied with this.”

“You don’t get it! You don’t get it at all! Nevermind that, just stay still!”

Seems like she couldn’t keep up with my banter; Darkness hmphed and poured warm water down my body.

“*Sigh*... I can’t believe I got seriously nervous over this. I feel like such a fool... Hey, I told you not to move! Are you purposely showing it off to me!?”

Hearing Darkness say such things rife with hidden meanings, I suddenly thought-

“Hey, you aren’t going to say this is the end of it, right? After coming this far while dressed like that, do you really think a healthy young man would be satisfied with just a backrub?”

“Huh!? But, don’t you have Megumin...”

Darkness hastily said with a flustered expression,

“Yeah, things have been going pretty well between Megumin and me lately, but are you fine with that? Are you really fine with that!? Didn’t you say something like ‘Ah, it seems I like you more than I thought’ to me a few days ago?!”

“I-I said that, but...”

“I was really happy back then.”

Hearing my honest words, Darkness sucked in a gasp.

“That’s...”

“I was really happy when you told me that. Yeah, I did reject you, but men are troublesome creatures, you see. We’ll still feel a little disappointed if the other party obediently gives up just because we rejected them once. But this is the case for you women as well, right?”

Darkness gulped.

“T-That means, instead of Megumin, you...”

“Ah, that’s impossible. I’m a pretty faithful man. Now that we’ve progressed to this point, there’s no way I can leap into the arms of another woman. I’m aiming to be a decent man, after all.”

At my words, Darkness shot me a questioning gaze.

“Wait, hold on, you’ve already chosen Megumin, but if we keep going like this, won’t we end up in an extremely risque situation...?”

Seems like Darkness is quite confused by all this.

“Is this too difficult for you to follow? Very well, I’ll put it in simpler terms. I want to become a proper, decent man. But it’s not like I can’t understand your feelings of love that are so overwhelming that you just can’t restrain yourself anymore.”

“It’s not like I like you to that extent... No, it’s nothing.”

Darkness, who was about to say something unnecessary, shut up upon meeting my gaze.

“Basically, this is what I’m saying. I’ll definitely resist you if you try and get me to cheat on Megumin. I’ll resist, but be it be my level or stats, there’s no way I can successfully fight you off if you were to do anything lewd to me. But I’m the Kazuma-san who highly

values my companions. No matter what you do, I won't hate you because of it."

"W-W-What are you saying!? People call you Kazutrash or Scumzuma, but that doesn't even begin to describe you! Why did Megumin fall for such a man!?"

Darkness suddenly started angrily lecturing me.

"S-Shut up! You were saying you liked that sort of man too! In the first place, there's no way for a healthy man to resist after being flung into these kinds of erotic situations one after another! If anything, you should be praising me for not having crossed the line up till this point!"

"Who would praise you for that!? How stupid! Ah, nevermind, I was the fool! I'm feeling unwell today, so you can handle the rest on your own!"

She just said something really amazing for an ojou-sama!

"Oh, you're leaving now? You haven't even finished washing my front yet! What kind of thanks is this!? You keep saying that I'm gutless, but you're pretty gutless yourself, aren't you?! What was it, a member of the Dustiness family will never yield? Don't you dare flatter yourself with such words!"

A vein started throbbing on Darkness's temple.

"Fine, I'll wash you! But that will be it! I won't go any further! I'm not that easy of a woman that I'll fall for your cheap provocations!"

"Enough with the words, hurry up and get to it! That is, if you have the resolve to go through with it! Aqua's dead drunk after eating my high quality snacks and Megumin's in the Crimson Demon village! In other words, there's no one left to interfere! Don't think someone will conveniently barge in just like what happened the last time."

Darkness angrily picked up the towel and started scrubbing me.

"Hey, that hurts! If you want to thank me, then be more gentle!"

"You really complain a lot for a man! I'm just going to hurry up and get this over with!"

Perhaps she's getting angry to hide her embarrassment. Darkness, her face bright red, has been staring at a certain spot for quite some time—

“Can’t you do something about that?! I can’t help but be bothered when I see your towel rise like that!”

“That’s just a little party trick. I took out a few frogs earlier, didn’t I? I gained a couple of levels and learnt the party trick skill.”

“As if there exist such a useless trick! Seriously, what kind of man are you... You really aren’t a match for the pure and straightforward Megumin! Hurry up and break up!”

How could she say such a thing?!

“Too bad, Megumin’s already head over heels for me! Who in hell would listen to you!? I think I’ll go find Megumin when she gets back and have her properly pamper me!”

“You really are the lowest form of trash... Oh, I know. I should’ve done this from the start.”

An inexplicable smile appeared on Darkness’s face.

“I’ll make something happen between us before telling Megumin exactly what happened. I’ll let her understand exactly how weak of a man you are and make her give up on you. It wouldn’t hurt Megumin if she gradually gives up on you of her own volition. If you can escape from my clutches, I’ll accept that you are a fitting man for Megumin!”

Saying that, she suddenly lunged at me!

How could this girl say something so wicked...!

“I-Megumin... Don’t think it’ll go exactly as you planned! Let go of me!”

“You say that, but you aren’t using any skills or resisting at all! You’re actually looking forward to this, aren’t you? Now, I’m sure you know what comes next...”

Darkness excitedly said some lines that wouldn’t seem out of place as part of a villainous monologue.

Just then,

“Just what exactly comes next?”

That was Megumin’s cold voice that I’m so used to hearing by now.

At this point, Darkness and I were pretty much naked and hugging each other.

Both of us looked towards the door.

Standing behind the glass door was Megumin, a mask of disgust on her face and glowing eyes.

Before Darkness could say anything,

“Help me! This woman barged into the bath to attack me!”

“Y-You bastard! You really are the trashiest of men!”

Chapter 3

Gifting Aid to this Stalking Victim!

Part 1

“Then, Darkness said ‘...Ah, it seems I like you more than I thought... ’”

“Kyaa!”

“T-Then? What happened next? How did you respond, Kazuma-san?”

“I responded... ‘Sorry, I already have Megumin. You should give up on me.’”

“Kyaaa!”

“Wait, hold on! You and Megumin are an item!? When did you become this popular!?”

Ever since the party to celebrate Sylphina’s recovery, I’ve been showing up at the guild whenever I have some free time to boast about my recent popularity to the other adventurers.

“It’s only natural, after all, it’s me we’re talking about! The one who defeated many strong enemies and even got featured in a special article in the newspapers! Here, take a look!”

I proudly unfurled the newspaper and showed it to the two female adventurers who came to listen to my stories.

Live a humble and down-to-earth life?

I did actually defeat many strong enemies, you know? Receiving a little bit of recognition for it is only my just reward.

The two of them had a strange expression as they read the newspaper that had my name on it.

“...Hey, isn't this the newspaper published in the capital?”

“Why would Kazuma-kun appear in that?”

I thought that they would start fawning over me, but for some reason, they instead turned gloomy.

“Why are you two so quiet? What, do you guys think that I've become unreachable because I've become a celebrity? Don't worry, I don't plan on leaving this town anytime soon. We're friends, aren't we? You can just casually call me Kazuma...”

“No, I don't really care about that.”

“Yeah, that thought hasn't crossed my mind at all.”

An instant refusal.

“Then why are you acting like this? Are you envious of me now that I'm featured in the news?”

The two of them traded looks.

“You'll be targeted by other famous adventurers, you know?”

And said something that bode nothing but trouble.

“—So, yeah, a couple of adventurers I know told me that, but it'll be fine, right? They won't attack me or anything, will they? In the first place, a sudden assault is a crime, right?”

In the hall of my mansion.

Darkness was trembling with the newspaper in her hand.

Seems like she was concerned about the fact that we used the authority of her house to get this article published.

“Y-You... You used the authority of my house for all kinds of frivolous matters again...”

Hey, where do you think you're going, Megumin?! I'm lecturing the both of you!"

Darkness caught Megumin as she tried to sneak off to the second floor with Chomusuke in hand.

At that time, Aqua tugged on my sleeve.

"Kazuma-san, Kazuma-san, please give me that article. Look at this, I'm described as the beautiful, blue-haired Archpriest."

"I don't want to, I want to keep a copy of my own special article too. Look, my introduction is the 'strongest of the weakest class'. It really tickles my chuuni soul. Nevermind that, Darkness, it'll be fine, right? The security of this town is good, right? If some rough-looking adventurers start spouting dangerous things, the police will cart them off, right?"

Darkness took a deep breath.

"Duels between adventurers are allowed by the Adventurer's Guild. You fought with that magic sword user some time ago, remember? Anyway, even in the worst case scenario, Aqua can-"

"Revive me even if I die!? Don't joke with me!"

This country has laws governing the strangest of things, so why the hell is it suddenly lacking at this most crucial point?!

Megumin, her collar firmly in Darkness's hand, gave me a reassuring smile.

"Don't worry, Kazuma. I'll deal with any adventurers who come seeking a challenge, so you can rest assured and continue boasting as you wish."

"Don't spoil this man, Megumin! I feel like you've been excessively overprotective of him lately. Just what happened!?"

Megumin eyes started glowing as she turned around to face Darkness.

"What happened? You dare ask me that?"

"Ah..."

In response to Megumin's sudden confrontation, Darkness flinched and let go of her collar.

"It's because someone had an affair and stole the first kiss of the man in my heart!"

"A-Affair!? Megumin, don't make it sound so obscene..."

Darkness uneasily took a step back, and Megumin advanced on her.

"I thought you were a sheltered young lady, so I let you confess your feelings and settle things out of the goodness of my heart, but you! You aren't satisfied by just confessing! Last night, too, you tried to seduce my man with that erotic body of yours!"

"I-I didn't try to seduce... Hey, Kazuma, you say something too!"

Rather than that, I want to hear Megumin say 'my man' one more time.

Weren't we supposed to be more than friends, but not yet lovers? Since when did I rank up to becoming Megumin's man?

Suddenly, Aqua, who was watching this lover's-quarrel-like scene unfold from the sidelines, slammed her hand on the table.

"Kazuma-san, you've changed! You are no longer the virgin NEET who had to rely on me to get through life! Since when did you become a harem protagonist?!"

Going from a virgin NEET to a harem protagonist is really leaping up high in life.

"Aqua, listen closely. There's no such thing as simple friendship between a girl and a guy. Even if it starts out as such, eventually they'll start becoming conscious of each other in a romantic way. And if a rich and talented and reliable man with a secure future like me is hanging around them... Yes, this is but the natural result."

I leisurely leaned back on the sofa, and casually patted Chomusuke who escaped from Megumin's grasp to laze by my side.

"This guy is saying something strange again. Still, even though we've been together for quite some time, for some strange reason, I have never once regarded Kazuma-san in a romantic manner."

“What a coincidence, I feel the same way. Every other girl I’ve been with has made my heart skip a beat at least once or twice, but you...”

.....

Aqua and I struck up menacing poses and slowly approached each other...

“And what’s with the clothes you’ve been wearing within the mansion recently?! They are so thin that you might as well be a woman of the night! Do you really want to show off your body to Kazuma that badly?! You do, don’t you?! Every time you take a bath, you always hang out close to Kazuma for no apparent reason!”

Next to us, Megumin pressed Darkness about the lascivious sleeping gown that she was wearing.

Now that she mentioned it, yeah, Darkness has definitely been walking around with much thinner clothing recently.

“T-That’s not it... I-It’s because it’s getting hot!”

“It’s almost winter!”

Wait, could she be? Darkness said something about giving up on me before she kissed me, but is she actually trying to seduce me?

There was that incident last night, too.

“And you purposefully wear these kinds of clothes in front of him! Kazuma is a weak-willed man, so I definitely won’t allow you to tempt him like this!”

“I’m not trying to tempt him- Ow, ow, ow! Don’t pull on me, Megumin! You’ll rip my sleeping gown-”

.....

“You’re wide open!”

“Grah!”

Just when my attention was drawn towards Darkness, Aqua attacked me with a flying

drop kick.

Receiving a kick to my stomach, I crumpled and curled up into a ball.

“I defeated the harem NEET!”

I’m going to kill this girl!

I couldn’t raise my voice due to the pain. Then, Chomusuke, who was laying next to me, raised her head.

She was motionlessly looking in a certain direction– looking at the window.

“What’s wrong with this little one? If she wants to go out, she would normally just jump over to the window and start pawing at it.”

“Ouch... Did you see something unspeakable? Is there a ghost over there or something?”

By the time I’ve recovered from the pain, Aqua has already moved to the window– and started shouting as she looked outside.

“Ah, hey, why are there so many stray ghosts in the city? I’ve been regularly cleansing the cemetery, so why are there so many of them here?”

At those words, everyone turned to face Aqua.

“...Hey, don’t think I’m at fault just because ghosts are involved. I really have nothing to do with this! These ghosts aren’t naturally occurring, someone summoned them here!”

...Summoned ghosts?

The only ones who can do that would be the rare holders of the advanced Necromancer class, and Liches that are hailed as the Kings of Undead.

There shouldn’t be a Necromancer in this town right now.

That leaves-

Aqua met my gaze and gave me a nod.

“I let her off because she serves me tea and snacks whenever I visit her store, but it seems like she’s finally shown her true colours! I’ve already taken a bath and changed into my pajamas, so I don’t feel like going out today, but I’ll go out early next morning to lecture her!”

No, you should go do it right now.

Part 2

Next morning.

Megumin has been using the same lake as her target for her daily explosion trip ever since Aqua started clamouring to eat fish, but she left the house early together with Darkness today.

Seems like she has gotten tired of using the same lake as her target.

Thus, only Aqua and I went to visit Wiz's shop.

"Is anyone here!?"

In high spirits, Aqua slammed open the door and marched into the store in a manner that suggested that she was ready to beat someone up.

"...If it isn't the lonely woman who raises such a fuss so early in the morning. What business do you have with my store? Moi is a little busy right now, so if you're here for something pointless, please come back at another time."

Vanir was at the back of the store.

"I came here to settle the score with Wiz after she summoned all those ghosts, but where is she? Actually, what do you mean by lonely woman? If you're praising the great Aqua-sama for standing alone above everyone else, I wouldn't mind praying for you to be reborn as a paramecium instead of a devil when you finally run out of lives."

"Moi is calling you lonely woman because even the easily-seduced harem brat wouldn't fall for you... H-Hey, Moi is always ready to accept a challenge from you, but didn't we agree not to turn the merchandise in this store into water!?"

The two of them started quarreling immediately, as expected. Still, the one we came to see isn't around.

"Say, Vanir, where did Wiz go? We have something to discuss with her."

“That prodigal storekeeper hasn’t been back since she left sometime last night. She has never had much luck with men, so it’d be a good thing if she found a nice guy to spend the night with.”

“Wait, you’re kidding, right!? She looks so mature, so how could she spend the night at a guy’s place like this!? First Kazuma and now her, everyone’s turning into a pervert!”

Just when I was sympathizing with Wiz who was being spoken badly of, a magic circle suddenly appeared on the floor.

And along with the light appeared the form of...

“Vanir-san, please help me-”

Seems like Wiz came here using teleport.

“Turn Undead!”

“Hyaaaaa-!”

And screamed in response to Aqua’s sudden spell.

“What the hell do you think you are doing!? You really did a number on Wiz this time!”

“Calm down, you perverted NEET. This is just a little light punishment for summoning all those ghosts last night.”

You don’t use purification spells for light punishments!

“You finally came back. Just where did you fool around, you promiscuous storekeeper? Didn’t Moi tell you that there are new goods coming in early this morning?”

“Yeah, that’s it! You have the face of a cake that no man would take, so why did you suddenly start spending the night out? Judging from your personality, I’m sure you got tricked by some bad man! Someone like Kazuma-san!”

This girl, the moment you let her be, she immediately gets full of herself.

Just when I was thinking what kind of punishment I should bestow onto Aqua, Wiz

frantically waved her hands.

“H-Hold on, you two! Why am I suddenly getting purified!? And why are the two of you saying such despicable things about me on top of that!?”

Wiz was on the verge of tears after being picked on by the two of them.

“Just ignore them. Anyway, what’s wrong? You seem to be in quite a panic.”

Wiz seems to be slightly transparent at the edges, but otherwise she seemed mostly fine. Guess Aqua really did hold back with her ‘light punishment’ spell.

Wiz tightly hugged her body as if to protect herself and screamed,

“I ran into a stalker!”

“—Here, drink some hot tea and calm down. It’s best to warm yourself after experiencing something scary.”

“T-thank you, Aqua-sama... But this tea makes me go numb whenever I drink it...”

The slightly transparent Wiz drank the tea and took a deep breath.

“So, what exactly happened? What’s this about a stalker?”

Seated on one of the chairs in the store, I once again asked Wiz for details after she has calmed down somewhat.

“Yes, a stalker! This happened yesterday evening...”

— There’s a restaurant that will throw out their leftover food around evening.

This happened when Wiz was returning from that restaurant after receiving some of their leftovers.

This store is situated in a back alley, so, of course, there wouldn’t be many people passing by that late at night.

As she made her way back, she ran into a man with a black hood pulled over his features standing in middle of the deserted street.

“Without removing his hood, the black robed man said: ‘My name is Duke. I’ve come from a faraway place to meet you... I’ve spent many years investigating you, and throughout all this time, my only thoughts are of you.’”

Hey, this sounds really dangerous.

Even Aqua had a face of disgust.

“He then said: ‘I’ve done nothing but train my body. Do you know why?’ Of course, I said I didn’t know, but then-!”

Wiz stumbled in her words. Seems like it was a really traumatic experience for her.

“He screamed: ‘It’s obviously so I can take you over!’ And threw away his robe. I quickly ran away... Afterwards, I was too afraid to return to the store, so I summoned a few ghosts and asked them to monitor the stalker’s movements...”

This guy is far more serious than I could ever expect.

It might have been in a back alley at night, but I would never expect a man to actually attack a woman in this town.

“I see, so that’s why the ghosts started gathering in this town. Ah well, guess it can’t be helped. Make sure you send them back to where they came from after this.”

“They aren’t stray dogs, Aqua. Actually, couldn’t you just send them to heaven right now? So, anyway, was the reason you didn’t come back until now because the stalker was hanging out near the store?”

I thought it was a pretty accurate guess, but Wiz shook her head.

“No, I don’t know where he is. I released a lot of ghosts into this city, but I couldn’t get a fix on him at all... Actually, it seems like most of the ghosts were exorcised by him...”

A stalker who can exorcise ghosts...

“So the culprit is an Axis Cultist?”

“Indeed, there’s no need to use Moi all-seeing eyes to determine that.”

“Hey, hold on! Don’t turn my precious children into scapegoats!”

Aqua strongly objected to the conclusion that Vanir and I drew.

Then, Wiz timidly said...

“Umm... Can you help me think of some countermeasures...?”

Oh, right, Wiz was in a serious pinch right now.

“But, we don’t even know where the black-robed stalker is right now, right? Hey, don’t you constantly boast about your all-seeing eyes? Why aren’t you putting them to use right now?”

“Moi does not need you to tell me that! Moi have been using my powers on him for quite some time, but Moi still can’t get a lock on him. It doesn’t seem like he’s an ordinary pervert. There’s a high chance that he is strong enough to fend off Moi all-seeing eyes.”

Strong and a pervert. The danger level just keeps rising.

Vanir suddenly slammed his fist into his palm.

“Unmarriageable Shopkeeper, perhaps you should change your way of thinking. It’s not often that you find someone who’s so madly obsessed with you. It might not be such a bad idea for you to get together with him, you know?”

“H-How could I!? He’s a man who would attack someone on sight! And please don’t call me Unmarriageable Shopkeeper.”

I think I’ve seen Vanir’s attitude somewhere before.

Oh, yeah, it’s the same attitude I took during Darkness’s arranged marriage meeting.

Just then.

“Is Wiz-san here? There’s a letter for you.”

“Ah, thank you.”

The door opened, and a delivery man handed a letter over to Wiz.

Receiving a letter at such a time... I have a bad feeling about this.

Sure enough, after Wiz read the contents of the letter, her face turned gloomy.

“It’s a letter from that stalker, yes? Moi may be able to find out where he is if Moi uses my powers upon that letter. Do you want me to launch an attack on him?”

Vanir is surprisingly cooperative. Seems like he’s still concerned for the safety of someone he works with.

“Thank you, Vanir-san, but I’ll settle this by myself. This letter is calling me to meet with him outside town tomorrow.”

Wiz had a determined expression as she tightly gripped the letter.

“I... This is the first time someone confessed to me, so I would like to seriously answer him.”

She declared.

“—So, Wiz intends to give him her answer tomorrow.”

That night.

While we were having dinner back in the mansion, I summarized the events of today.

Darkness and Megumin both had a strange expression after hearing that.

“A stalker, huh. My self-proclaimed rival seems like she might lean a little in that direction, so I’m a little worried about her future... These kinds of people are really scary when they become desperate. There’s no telling what they’ll do when they snap.”

You’re talking about Yunyun, right?

“Still, to think that such a pervert would appear in this peaceful city... How could he cause trouble for the upstanding citizens of this town?”

Darkness passionately said as she elegantly chopped up the meat on her plate.

“...I didn’t think the day would come when I could hear the word pervert come out of your mouth.”

“W-What are you-!?”

Aqua, who has finished her meal and was currently feeding Emperor Zell on her lap, suddenly interjected,

“Wiz said she’ll settle it herself, but what exactly does that pacifistic girl plan to do? Does she seriously intend to accept his confession? Megumin and Darkness have been obsessed with perverted thoughts lately. If Wiz gets a boyfriend too, wouldn’t the number of playmates I have be drastically reduced?”

“Hey, Aqua, I’m not obsessed with perverted thoughts! I’m not like Darkness who dresses like a woman of the night to seduce men! I’m a pure maiden who hasn’t even kissed a man yet!”

“Hey...!”

The no-longer-pure Darkness started with a tearful expression.

I sunk into my thoughts.

Wiz is fundamentally a kind person.

She definitely won’t be able to refuse if she was pushed. It feels like all he has to say is, ‘Let’s start by being friends,’ and she’ll happily accept.

To be honest, she’s about on the same level as Yunyun who will happily follow anyone who claims to want to be her friend.

Is it really okay to let Wiz handle this alone?

My popular period has just started. It’s entirely possible for Wiz to end up joining my harem in the near future.

...No, wait, what the hell am I thinking?!

Get a hold of yourself, Satou Kazuma! What would you want to create a harem for?! Didn't you just reject Darkness?!

But, this and that are different matters.

Wiz is a close female friend of mine. I don't want to see her get snatched off by some unknown man hailing from who knows where.

That leaves–

“Hey, Kazuma-san? You have a really evil look on your face. What's wrong?”

“At least say this is the manly face of a guy protecting his friend!”

Part 3

Next morning.

Hiding in front of the store, I was amazed by Wiz's attire.

Wiz was very gorgeously dressed today.

Perhaps it's because I only ever see her wearing a frumpy robe or an apron, or perhaps it's because I'm only surrounded by childish-looking girls, but it was really refreshing to see her like this.

"Hey Kazuma, now's not the time to ogle her! Hurry up and activate Lurk."

Darkness's words snapped me out of my daze, and I hastily activated my skill.

Having concealed our presence, we crept after Wiz as she headed out of town.

"Hey, Kazuma, I feel like a stalker somehow. At this rate, will we end up becoming her second and third stalker?"

"Don't say that, Aqua. This isn't stalking, this is simply keeping watch over a friend who might be heading into danger from afar."

"We call that 'stalking'."

Ignoring Megumin's reply, I continued following Wiz.

And just as Wiz said, a black-robed figure was standing in the plains just outside of town.

Around him was an open, empty field, with no obstacles that we could safely hide ourselves behind.

There was a high chance of us being discovered if we moved any closer.

That said, we couldn't hear their words from where we were right now.

I activated my Farsight skill and my Lip Reading skill to follow their conversation.

“Seems like you read my letter. I’m glad that you accepted my request.”

“...After hearing you say that to me, there’s no way I wouldn’t be here...”

Good, looks like Lip Reading works even at this distance.

“It has been too long... I’ve been searching for you for a long time. It really surprised me to hear that you opened a magic item shop in this town. But I’ve finally met you. This made it worth spending all the time on the road to get here.”

“D-Did you really travel such a long distance just to meet with me?”

The weighty words of the hooded man made Wiz falter.

Suddenly, I felt a series of sharp tugs on my clothes, interrupting my concentration.

“Kazuma-san, Kazuma-san, don’t just listen for yourself. Interpret for us too. What are the two of them saying?”

“I’m only listening in with my Lip Reading skill, so this is just my interpretation, but... It seems like that man traveled a long distance in order to confess to Wiz.”

“Eh!?”



LINKNOWN MAN

I'M SURE YOU KNOW WHY
I CALLED YOU OUT HERE.
JUST AS I SAID THE OTHER
DAY... I'VE ALWAYS BEEN
THINKING ABOUT YOU. I'VE
TRAINED MY BODY SO
THAT I'LL BE A WORTHY
FIT FOR YOU.

Y-YOU WANT
ME TO MARRY
YOU...!

SEEMS
LIKE THIS
MAN CALLED
WIZ OUT HERE
TO CONFESS
TO HER.

Ignoring the surprised gasp of the three, I activated my skill once again.

“I’m sure you know why I called you out here. Just as I said the other day... I’ve always been thinking about you. I’ve trained my body so that I’ll be a worthy fit for you!”

“E-Even if you say that... And this is our first meeting, I don’t even know how to respond! And I don’t think it’s good to boldly perform such actions in the middle of town!”

Wiz furiously blushed in response to the man’s passionate declaration.

“Hey, Kazuma! Wiz seems to be blushing! Just what did that guy say?”

“He said ‘I’ve always been thinking of you,’ ‘I’ve trained myself just for you,’ and stuff like that. He seems to be the kind of guy who thinks that being strong will make him popular with the ladies.”

“It’s pretty much their first meeting! How passionate of him!”

Darkness’s face flushed out of excitement. The man probably got worked up as well; we could faintly hear his voice even from over here.

“Yes, now that I think about it, it might have been a bit too hasty of me to do that in the middle of town. I chose a deserted alley, but...”

“Just because nobody is there to see it doesn’t make it okay! That sort of thing should wait till we know each other better...!”

Holy hell, he isn’t just a regular pervert. He’s an amazing man.

He’s completely different from me who becomes completely inept in the face of Darkness’s and Megumin’s advances.

Still, I don’t think I want to become that kind of man.

“...I see. Yes, it is indeed a little unfair only for me to know about you. Seems like there’s a need for me to say a little about myself...”

“Y-Yeah. After all, I don’t even know your name...”

After thinking for a while, the robed man removed his hood.

Underneath the hood was an androgynous but extremely handsome face.

Perhaps Wiz didn't expect the man to be so handsome, but the blush on her face deepened.

"My name is Duke. My specialty is fire-aligned Advanced Magic. It's the complete opposite of you, who specializes in ice-aligned magic."

"Y-You don't even intend to hide our lack of compatibility, I see. I'm quite fond of honest men, but... To think that you even know about that..."

Such stalker-like declarations seem to have spooked Wiz a little.

But Duke simply laughed, as though he was proud of it.

"Of course! You were known as the Ice Witch back when you were still human, after all."

"W-Wait, you know that I'm not human!?"

Duke's unexpected remarks took both Wiz and me by surprise.

"Hey, Kazuma, don't stop interpreting! Wiz seems surprised, just what happened!?"

Aqua shook me by the shoulders.

"He knows that Wiz is a Lich, as well as the types of spells she specializes in. He really did his homework. Seems like he's quite serious about her."

"He's not just a regular stalker, but an extreme pervert!"

"For the sake of the world and all of its inhabitants, it might be better to just evacuate Wiz and blow him up with Explosion right here!"

Duke continued speaking.

"I know everything about you! You could say that I am the man who understands you best in this world! Now, I've told you about myself, so let's get back to the original

topic!”

“W-W-Wait! I’m not emotionally prepared yet! D-Does that mean that you traveled all the way here even after learning that I’m undead? Aren’t you afraid of me?”

In response to Duke’s relentless advances, Wiz took a step back.

“Are you making fun of me? What’s so scary about a Lich?”

“T-That’s... If you put it that way...”

Holy hell, just how gutsy is this man!?

“Hey, this is bad! I think Wiz has been moved! That bastard said something like ‘Who cares if you are an undead!? I’m not afraid of a lich!’”

Hearing my words, Darkness trembled.

“He doesn’t care even though she’s a being hailed as the King of Undead... This is true love! W-What should I do, Kazuma!? I feel like I really want to support that man!”

Seems like birds of a feather really do flock together, Darkness seemed to have some kind of weird sympathy for that pervert.

“What are you saying!? Saying undead can be loved too is nothing short of blasphemy! Sure, Wiz is cooling and it’s comfortable to sleep while holding onto her in the summer, but that girl is just a moving corpse! Holding feelings of love towards a corpse, just how depraved is he!?”

“W-Well, calling her a moving corpse isn’t exactly wrong, but... Don’t ever say that in front of her, Aqua. She’ll cry.”

Ignoring the fuss my companions are making, I nervously continued observing the two.

“Now, that’s enough talk! Ice Witch, let’s have a duel!”

“Ehh? W-Where did that come from!?”

Hmm?

“Why? Isn’t that obvious? It’s to demonstrate my power to you and have you give up your current job!”

“Eeeh!?”

Holy hell.

“Kazuma, come on, interpret for us! What happened!? What did they say!?”

I turned towards Aqua who was repeatedly shaking me and said in a low voice,

“That bastard challenged Wiz to a duel. If he wins, he wants Wiz to quit her job.”

Darkness appeared to be seriously shocked upon hearing that.

“Wiz’s job is as the storekeeper of her store, right? And... she used to regularly accept jobs from the real estate agent to exorcise the undead in the graveyard and the surrounding houses, right?!”

“Is he telling the one he loves to stop taking on dangerous work? Seems like he doesn’t know that the job of managing the cemetery has already been transferred over to Aqua. Still, this is...”

Yes, if he is saying that...

“Y-You want me to marry you...”

Yeah, that’s probably it.

I’ll protect you, so you don’t need to take on such dangerous work anymore. Just wait for me at home.

What a passionate proposal.

He’s a real man.

I feel ashamed for even thinking about interfering with my half-baked emotions.

“Leave your work to me! Then, let’s do this, you-!”

Duke started chanting something and grasped his robe.

And just as he was about to throw away his robe, Wiz, blushing furiously red, cast a spell at the same time.

“Teleport!”

This extremely passionate proposal stunned even us who were watching from a distance.

It seems like it’s too much for Wiz, inexperienced with matters of romance as she is, to bear. She cast her spell and fled from the scene–

Part 4

“Wiz didn’t come back today either. There’s nowhere for me to play now. I’m really bored~”

It’s been three days since Wiz fled the scene.

I’ve heard that Duke was still hanging around town, so it doesn’t seem like he has given up yet.

“A sudden proposal is really too tough for a person inexperienced with love to deal with. The matter of romance really is complex. Even one as popular as I hasn’t grasped all of its intricacies.”

“You know, you’re still a virgin NEET. Don’t let it get to your head just because you’ve become slightly more popular.”

Aqua said such inflammatory words, but after changing jobs to a chad, I wouldn’t get angry over such cheap provocations.

“I’m going out for dinner, so you don’t need to make my share. I’ll probably be staying out tonight.”

“Say, you occasionally stay out for the night, but where do you go? If you’re going drinking, I would really like it if you could take me with you.”

Aqua expectantly looked at me as I stood next to the door, fully dressed for a night out.

“I’m having a drink with the guys, so sorry, no can do. I’ll give you some allowance, so go buy some good wine and share it with everyone.”

“How wonderful, Kazuma-san! I’ll properly watch over the house while you’re gone!”

Aqua beamed after receiving a little bit of money.

It’s true that I’m going out drinking with the guys, but that’s not the only thing I’m doing.

It’d be really difficult to accomplish my actual objective if Aqua were to tag along.

As for what my actual objective is, well, that should be obvious.

Even though things have been progressing well between Megumin and me lately, my needs still need to be met.

If anything, it's only proper to take precautions to avoid losing control at a critical time. That's what being a gentleman is all about.

After Aqua saw me off, I headed downtown.

“—Hey, Kazuma, what's wrong? You've been staring at that guy for some time now. Do you know him?”

At a pub that I occasionally visit, the blonde-haired delinquent adventurer, Dust, asked me.

“No, it's not like we know each other...”

Whenever I stay out for the night, I usually round up a few of the guys and kill time at such places until night falls, that is, until the succubi start making their rounds.

Then...

“Oh, I haven't seen your pretty face around before. My name is Dust. I'm a little famous around these parts.”

“...Why did you suddenly come here for? Do you have some business with me?”

The moment I said I didn't know him, the blonde delinquent immediately ran up to cause trouble.

“I already named myself, so shouldn't you name yourself too? Don't you know what courtesy is? Eh?”

“...My name is Duke. I'll ask again, do you have some business with me?”

The man was the same hooded man who proposed to Wiz.

I did think of stopping Dust, but I recalled that Duke guy saying that he can use Advanced Magic.

That means he must be a high-leveled adventurer. There's no need for me to bail him out.

Whatever ends up befalling Dust is just him reaping what he sowed.

"You're a new adventurer here, right? I just said it, but I'm a little famous around these parts. It'll save you a lot of trouble down the road if you treat me to a drink."

"Ho, you wish to extort money from me?... I see, there really are all kinds of folks out there. It's not often I experience something so interesting."

Saying that, he stood up and released an intense pressure.

Yeah, he's a man who challenged Wiz to a duel. A drunk, small-time delinquent like Dust wouldn't be a match for him.

Then, Dust let out a friendly smile and extended a hand to Duke.

"Heh, you passed. Yes, that's how adventurers should be. For us, it's all over if we get looked down upon. That's why I frequently call out to newbie adventurers like this. If they are the kind of cowards who honestly fork over the money, I'll tell them that they aren't suited to be an adventurer and go back to their mother. And for someone like you, how about a drink?"

"...Is that so? You're quite interesting indeed."

Duke shot him an amused look before sitting back down.

Dust ordered a drink for Duke, bid him farewell, and backed away from the table at the first opportunity.

After he casually made his way back to me...

"Hey, Kazuma, what the hell is he?! If you knew he was such a dangerous person, you should've told me! I ended up having to treat him to a drink!"

"Y-You... Anyway, how strong do you think he is?"

As far as personality and way of life goes, this man could be said to be hopeless, but his strength as an adventurer is pretty well acknowledged by the residents of this town.

If he could grasp Duke's abilities, I might be able to let Wiz handle him...

"That guy is dangerous. He's head and shoulders above anyone else I've faced. You could say he's on the same level as a Demon King's General or a high bounty target."

"So... you're saying that he's strong enough to tangle with me."

How could this be? Could it be that he's dangerous even for Wiz?

Dust seemed like he still wanted to say something, but I ignored him and approached the robed man.

"– Hey, do you have a moment? My name is Satou, yes, the one hailed as the strongest adventurer in this town, Satou Kazuma."

"Here comes another stran... Satou? Satou Kazuma?! That Satou Kazuma?!"

Has my name really spread that far?

Well, that isn't unexpected. I'm famous enough to appear in the news, after all. It isn't unusual for other strong adventurers like him to know my name.

I gave him a confident smile.

"Yes, I'm that Satou Kazuma. The one who took down many high bounty targets and Demon King's Generals–"

"The Satou Kazuma who simply gives orders to his companions and holds very little power himself!? The very same Kazuma who would lose in a fight with Kobolds!?"

.....

I fell silent and felt a little like crying, and Duke regarded me with a slightly amused gaze.

"I see, it's just as the rumours said. I can definitely feel the aura of a small fry from you.

The reports of the Demon King's Generals falling one after another to a party operating under the orders of a NEET must be mistaken somehow..."

"Hey, are you picking a fight?"

I came over here in good faith, but this bastard just keeps shooting his mouth off!

"...Hmph, I came to this town for a woman, but... Very well, I originally wanted to wait till my business with her is concluded, but there really is no reason to wait. I might as well take care of you right now."

"Don't make it sound like you're taking care of a small errand while out buying dinner. What, you want to go? I'm stronger than you think. I didn't just bumble my way into taking out all those Demon King's Generals! And I have the backing of the great noble house of Dustiness! You'll regret it if you carelessly pick a fight with me! And I have a lot of strong friends too!"

I properly showed off my strength to Duke who was looking down on me. I definitely did not bring up Dustiness and my friends because I got scared after Duke narrowed his eyes.

"...Hmph, right now there's a person that I need to give my fullest attentions to, so I'll let you go for today."

"I-I'm a man who'll get things done when he needs to! People call me Kazuma-san who becomes really strong when he gets serious! It's just, I'll get serious tomorrow!"

Right, I properly told him off.

It sounded a little like something a sore loser would say, but at the very least I wouldn't be looked down upon as an adventurer.

Still, I almost got dragged into a duel with him.

Those girls told me that other famous adventurers will target me now that my name has appeared in the news. Is this what they were talking about?

That was really close. It might be a little too late, but I'll try and keep a low profile from now on.

“So I’ll let you...”

I was going to say ‘go for today’, but then I remembered.

No, wait, this isn’t what I originally came here for!

“Say, that person you need to give your fullest attention to... you’re talking about Wiz, right?”

Duke’s reaction was instantaneous.

Before I realized it, he had a black knife at my throat and was staring daggers at me.

“How do you know that? What’s your relationship with Wiz?”

“C-C-Calm down! Please calm down! I’m a friend of Wiz! She’ll definitely be torn up if you kill me!”

In the face of Duke’s sudden change of attitude, my voice became shrill.

“...I don’t know how much you know about Wiz, but you shouldn’t get too close to that girl. She isn’t someone a small fry like you can handle.”

Saying that, Duke sheathed his dagger.

Just saying Wiz’s name made him snap. Just how much does he care about her?

“I know that you’re aiming for Wiz. Actually, I’m willing to support you.”

“What did you say?”

Duke widened his eyes in surprise upon hearing my words.

“...Weren’t you a friend of Wiz?”

“It’s precisely because I’m her friend. I don’t think she’s very well suited for her current job. And...”

I lowered my voice.

“Even if she is a Lich, she has the right to seek her own happiness. I’m thinking that it’d be nice for her to retire and live a happy life afterwards.”

“...You still continue to associate with her even after knowing she’s a Lich. Seems like I need to revise my assessment of you.”

Duke seemed to slightly relax his guard after saying that.

Yes, if he is this passionate about her, then I can feel safe entrusting Wiz to him.

Honestly, it’s not a good feeling to see a friend I’m familiar with be snatched away by some unknown stranger.

But Wiz is getting up in age.

It’s about time she found someone to settle down with.

“I’m of the same mind. I too do not think she’s particularly suited for her current job. It may have been a different matter back when she was still being hailed as the Ice Witch, but her current state is just too pitiful.”

“Well, she was a pretty famous adventurer in the past. She might’ve been a little more capable back then than she is currently...”

Yeah, if she was still adventuring, she might be more in tune with the needs of adventurers and brought in some goods that are more useful to them.

But, right now, she’s an airhead that even Vanir couldn’t bail out.

“Still, you should stop trying to seek a fight with her. Couldn’t you peacefully talk things out and get her to give up her job that way?”

“...? What are you saying? There’s no meaning in doing things that way. In order to take over for her, I need to prove my strength.”

Duke is probably still under the impression that Wiz is still accepting dangerous work like purifying the undead.

True, in order to take over the job of purifying the undead, it’s necessary to prove your strength to the people around you.

It'd be easy to tell him that Wiz is no longer in charge of such dangerous jobs, but considering how much he cares about her, should I really tell him that?

And, having Wiz marry someone might actually be a good thing for the magic item shop.

"Say, can I ask something? Um... Do you intend to take on all of Wiz's current responsibilities?"

"Of course! There's no better person fit for her job than me! After doing so, I'll definitely turn this sorry state of affairs around."

This guy is pretty confident of himself.

To so confidently declare that he'll turn that store that not even Vanir, with his all-seeing eyes, could prevent from being on the verge of bankruptcy, just what kind of man is he?

...Hold on a second.

"Wait, isn't there a serious obstacle standing in the way of that? If you know so much about Wiz, I'm sure you know about Vanir too, right? It'll be one thing if you are just getting Wiz to give up her place, but if you wish to replace her afterwards, I don't think he'll accept that."

Yes, Vanir's goal is to earn a lot of money through Wiz's magic item shop, and then use that money to build a massive dungeon.

He seems quite happy to see Wiz marry off, but will he have the same attitude to someone else taking the spot of shopkeeper?

There's no way that twisted devil will stand by and let that happen.

"Hmm, Vanir-dono, huh... True, he will be most troublesome, but this is between Wiz and me. Even if it's Vanir-dono, I can't afford to back down!"

Duke's words gave me an unprecedented shock.

Just how gutsy is this guy?

Even I don't want to ever be at odds with that cheat level devil.

In other words, he's willing to go that far for Wiz...

"Even if you say that, he'll definitely get in the way. However..."

Then I'll ready my resolve too.

I raised a mug to Duke-

"I don't dislike guys like you..."

And smiled at the man amongst men who wouldn't back down even in the face of Vanir.

Part 5

“Thus, I’ve decided to support him.”

“I don’t really get what you’re saying.”

Next morning.

Having come back early in the morning, I relayed the events that took place with Duke to the others over breakfast.

“Like I said, that Duke might be a little stubborn, but I feel like he’s a very manly person and, overall, isn’t a bad guy.”

After receiving the so-called harem treatment from Megumin and Darkness, watching Duke’s pure and straightforward love was like having a bucket of cold water dumped over my head.

Even though things were progressing well between Megumin and me, a little bit of seduction from Darkness was enough to make me dive right for her.

Looking back, all my recent actions have been extremely trashy, even by my standards.

It’s a complete contrast to Duke, who was prepared to brave anything for Wiz.

As a fellow man, there’s no way I can resist cheering him on.

On top of that, I feel like trying to live in a manner that will allow others to call me pure and upright with a straight face.

“...Well, as far as I’m concerned, it’s a good thing for the women around Kazuma to get hitched, so I don’t really mind...”

“Ho? You were referring to me as ‘your man’ earlier, but you’re still worried about that? You have a pretty cute side, don’t you?”

“...I don’t know what you’re trying to do, but that act is giving me the creeps, so please drop it.”

Just then, Aqua, who was poking at her egg with a fork, said to me as I was nodding to myself,

“Are you really fine with letting a man with such an unclear background take Wiz away? Knowing your personality, I was expecting you to say something like ‘Megumin and Darkness aren’t enough, Wiz, Yunyun, Iris, Eris, Chris, and Komekko are all mine!’”

“Just what kind of man do you thin... Hey, hold on, isn’t that last one a bit strange!? Even I have a line I won’t cross, you know!? I’ve said it many times, and I’ll say it again: I’m not a lolicon!”

Come to think of it, pretty much all the bad rumours that led to me being called Lolima and such are pretty much all started by her.

Just when I was about to stand up to teach Aqua a good lesson,

A blushing Darkness suddenly slammed her hand on the table and stood up.

“I’ve really changed my opinion of you, Kazuma! Yes, that man’s love is a very precious thing indeed! He loves her even if she is a Lich! Yes, he cannot even be compared to a certain weak man who can’t even resist a little bit of seduction...!”

“Hey, are you referring to me? You’re the one who seduced me in the first place!”

Ignoring my words, Darkness excitedly continued.

“Kazuma, I’ll help you! All we have to do is to stop Vanir from getting between the two, right? Just tell me what to do!”

Darkness looked at me with expectant, sparkling eyes.

Well, I’m happy that you want to help, but...

“Both of you, calm down. First we need to confirm how they feel towards each other, right? Unless you are a mature adult who’s well versed with matters of romance like me, most women will become flustered in the face of Duke’s passionate pleas. In the first place, Wiz is still missing. Things can’t exactly progress when one of the parties isn’t here.”

“Since when did you become a mature woman who’s well versed with matters of

romance, you little brat? The only person that can be described as mature here is an experienced man like me.”

I proudly boasted, and Megumin cheek’s puffed up in anger.

“...Then, shall I show you what a mature woman I am? I’ll be heading over to your room tonight.”

She flashed me a knowing smile, as if she was thinking ‘I know exactly what you are going to do.’

“No, I’m not in the mood for such stuff tonight. I just saw what it means to be a real man yesterday. It’ll be some time before I fall for your tricks again, nor will I be lured in by your somewhat lacking sex appeal.”

“Huh?”

Seems like Megumin was pretty confident in herself earlier; she let out a confused gasp after hearing my response.

“What? Did you think I’m a simple man who’s raring to go at any time?”

“Err, no... It’s just... I thought things were going well between us, so I was sure you would go for it...”

Aqua leaned over to the confused Megumin and said,

“Right now, Kazuma won’t be moved by anything you say. He spent the night outside yesterday, right? You see, whenever he spends the night outside-”

“Aqua, what happened to the allowance I gave you yesterday? Did you spend it already? How did the wine taste?”

I grabbed Aqua as she was about to say something unnecessary and planned to drag her outside...

“The wine was quite delicious, but why are you dragging me off? Wait, I haven’t eaten my dessert yet! Where are you taking me? Stop! Darkness, Megumin, in this town, there are succ-!”

“I’ll give you some allowance today, so come with me for a bit! I have something very important to discuss with you!”

Chapter 4

Giving a Goddess's Blessings upon this Man!

Part 1

It has been raining since morning.

Despite that, Aqua has been out in the yard, seemingly paying no heed to the weather as she happily worked on her plot.

Next to her, Megumin, holding an umbrella, seemed to be giving her instructions.

"Say, Kazuma, can't you say something to them? Farm work isn't easy. Every year, some Matsutake and Bamboo farmers always end up going missing."

Darkness said that with a troubled face as she looked at them through the window.

"I know farmers have it tough. There are typhoons in my country, and every year, a few farmers end up going missing during the typhoon season. But they won't listen to anything I say, so what can I do?"

"You have typhoons where you come from too, huh? Yeah, the vegetables do get agitated during typhoon season..."

I was talking about the farmers who end up in trouble after going out to check on the irrigation channels and their fields, but it seems like we weren't on the same page.

"Kazuma, come take a look! They've already started sprouting!"

Aqua excitedly shouted. She really is a goddess of water; she doesn't seem worried about being in the rain at all.

"The eyes of the mackerel are also showing. They are a little grotesque to look at, but you should still take a look."

Even Megumin is getting in the mood...

“Say, Darkness, don’t you think it’s odd to catch watermelons in the sea and harvest mackerel in the fields?”

“Why would it be odd? You say some really strange things sometimes.”

As I was experiencing my first culture shock in quite some time, someone knocked on the door.

When I opened the door, there was a penguin frantically waving his flippers standing there.

Before I could ask him how he knew where we were or what is he doing here, Aqua noticed him.

“Ah!”

“Pik!”

The penguin let out a bird-like cry in response to Aqua’s shout.

“I’m sure I told you that I’ll purify you if I see you outside. You sure have some guts coming here. Very well, that strange devil isn’t here to interfere, so I’ll send you to heaven right now.”

“No, please wait! There’s a reason why I came here. Vanir-sama and Storekeeper-dono are...”

—After braving the rain and rushing to the magic item shop,

“Wiz! You’re back! Everyone was worried about you!”

“Vanir-san, you idiot! That tactless part of you hasn’t changed in the slightest!”

“You shouldn’t expect any tact from devils in the first place, you foolish storekeeper! You’ve become a lovestruck fool after fooling around outside! If you want to get married, then just get to it!”

The sight of the two of them fighting greeted me the moment I opened the door.

“Are you really fine with that!? I’m going to get married, you know?! I won’t be able to come back to this store after that! The owner is going to change! Aren’t contracts supposed to be absolute to a devil!? What happened to the contract we had to make this shop prosper together!?”

Perhaps because she walked through the rain, Wiz was drenched to the bone.

As for Vanir, a vein was popping on the temple of his carefully crafted body as he responded.

“Left-on-the-shelf shopkeeper, after you leave the store and the new storekeeper takes over, Moi will just make the store prosper with him and gain the funds to construct my dungeon that way! So just relax and go get married, you lovestruck shopkeeper!”

“Why you!”

Looking at Wiz tearfully grab at Vanir, I turned towards the penguin next to me and asked,

“What the hell is going on?”

“Vanir-sama and Storekeeper-dono have been like this for quite some time. I thought Storekeeper-dono finally came back, but she seems to have her head in the clouds and ended up getting angry at Vanir-sama. I can’t find a way to stop them, so I thought to seek your help, young man.”

I wanted to tell him not to call me for this sort of stuff, but it’s good to know that Wiz is back, so I’ll leave it for now.

A stern-faced Aqua charged between the two of them as they started to struggle with each other.

“Hey, Wiz, where have you been!? You really worried everyone, you know! Hurry up and apologize!”

“Aqua, they are a little preoccupied right now. Getting in there will just complicate things, so just stay with me in this corner for now.”

Megumin dragged Aqua, who once again was completely unable to read the mood, over to a corner of the shop.

Darkness then asked,

“In the first place, what are the two of you fighting about? Come on, even Count Zereshrute is troubled.”

Wiz tearfully hugged Darkness.

“Listen to this, Darkness! I’ve been wandering around the deepest levels of what is said to be the world’s largest dungeon for the past few days. I’ve been killing monsters while thinking about things.”

Just when I was wondering how would that lead to the two of them quarreling, Wiz plucked a flower from a vase in the shop and started playing around with it.

“That man... That Duke-san who suddenly appeared and said that he’d be willing to accept all of me... Why is he so passionate about me...”

Oh, is that what being lovestruck means?

Vanir seemed to have something to say, but Wiz didn’t notice at all and continued.

“I mean, I’m a Lich, you know? But even then, he said that he doesn’t care. He even said, ‘Even after turning into an undead, you’re beautiful. I like you just the way you are...’”

“I was watching from afar using Lip-Reading, but did he actually say that?”

Ignoring my words, Wiz continued fiddling with the flower.

“And he proposed to me on our very first meeting... He even told me that ‘Such a beautiful flower isn’t suited for such dangerous work. I’ll protect you from now on, so...’”

“He didn’t say that.”

Yeah, he didn’t go that far, did he?

“Kazuma-san, I’m talking about very important matters right now, so please be quiet... Even though he proposed to me, I still have the contract with Vanir and my store to look after... Aah, what should I do...”

Wiz stole glances at the person at her side as she said that, and Vanir, his face a mask of annoyance, said,

“She’s been that way ever since she came back. Moi told her that if she wants to continue being a storekeeper, she should stop running away from the store and work properly, and if you want to get married, then do as you will, but for some reason she got mad after that.”

“Can’t you treat me with more care?! Is that all our relationship is worth? Aren’t Vanir-san and I partners who teamed up to make both our dreams come true?”

Vanir made a extremely disgusted expression upon hearing the word ‘partners’.

“A contract is absolute to a devil, but... Even Moi has been on the verge of breaking down in the face of your haplessness... Moi has been thinking if I should take a little break in our contract-”

“I won’t let you give up on our contract! I know very well that this store would’ve long since closed down if Vanir-san wasn’t here. B-But, the only person who can make the world’s largest dungeon would be me. Are you really fine with giving up on your dream of facing down adventurers at the bottom of the world’s toughest dungeon, Vanir-san?!”

Wiz desperately tried to convince Vanir as she clung on to him.

Aqua interrupted,

“So, are you willing to get together with him? Or is he not your type?”

Hearing that, Wiz played with the flower in her hand while subtly trying to keep an eye on Vanir’s reaction.

“That man doesn’t look too bad, and he seems pretty devoted to me... But, you know, I have a duty to see Vanir’s dream realized...”

“As far as Moi is concerned, Moi doesn’t really care who the storekeeper is. All Moi

needs from you is for you to build the dungeon after Moi acquired the required funds.”

“Is Vanir-san a tsundere?! There’s way too much tsun and not enough dere! Please at least care a little more about me! Haven’t we known each other for a long time? Are you really fine with me leaving with that man!?”

The flower in her hand slowly wilted. Did she activate her Drain Touch out of anger?

“It’s quite troubling to call the genderless Moi a tsundere... Okay, okay, fine, Moi will put a little more effort into my all-seeing gaze this time. Moi will go chase him away if Moi sees anything too horrible about him, are you happy now?”

Seeing the annoyed-looking Vanir, I realized that this might actually be good for Duke.

The biggest obstacle to Duke taking over Wiz’s store would be Vanir, but it doesn’t seem like Vanir himself is too opposed to it.

It’s just like a devil to think so coldly, but with this, Duke’s biggest obstacle has been removed.

...No, wait, there’s the possibility that Vanir may find fault with him after turning his all seeing gaze upon him.

Just when I’m wondering if I should stop him, Vanir’s eyes shone with a suspicious gleam...

“Ho... He is in sight. The man who is so obsessed with you is currently busy collecting information about you in town.”

After hearing that, the edges of Wiz’s mouth twitched upwards slightly despite her attempts to keep her face straight.

“...Hmm? Oh, my, this is... How wonderful! This truly is wonderful! Moi wondered why he was so difficult to see, so this is why!”

“W-What is it, Vanir-san? What’s so wonderful about him? It’s really rare to see you praise someone so wholeheartedly.”

Just as Wiz was taken aback by Vanir’s sudden change in attitude, the self-proclaimed all-seeing devil joyfully said,

“The devil who sees through all so declares! When you respond to that man’s feelings, a man will experience delight and merriment to a degree never before seen in this world.”

Part 2

As we were making our way back from the magic item shop,

“Still, to think that Vanir would accept that man so easily... As expected of the man I acknowledged...”

Thinking back to what just took place, I couldn't help but think out loud.

“Why is this man so enamoured with that stalker, I wonder... Well, compared to a certain person who'll go have fun with some female adventurers the moment you take your eyes off him and find excuses to fool around in the bath after just a little seduction, his devotion is pretty respectable...”

Megumin shot me a meaningful gaze.

“Yeah, unlike a certain someone, he seems pretty devoted to the woman he wishes to live together with. W-Well, being unfaithful is one of the hallmarks of a trashy man, so I don't dislike it...”

Darkness also shot me a meaningful gaze...

“What? Yeah, the bath incident was my bad! But if you don't mind me saying, you guys were at fault too! Megumin keeps sending me all kinds of hints but never crosses the line, and Darkness keeps flaunting her needlessly erotic body but always gets embarrassed and chickens out-”

“This guy has started throwing away the last shreds of his dignity!”

“You really have been turning into the type of man that I used to consider my ideal as of late...”

Just as the two of them started berating me, Aqua, who was tottering around behind us, suddenly declared,

“I won't accept this. I won't accept a man with such an unknown background! Isn't it odd? This is Wiz we are talking about! Why is he so obsessed with her? He must definitely be up to no good! This is a goddess's intuition! That man is definitely not in love with Wiz!”

In response to Aqua's sudden declaration, I turned around.

"You just don't want to lose the only friend you can have tea with, right?"

"Well, yes, but I still have a bad feeling about this! It's hard to put it in words, but I feel like this will end with someone I really hate getting really really happy..."

I see. I don't get it at all.

"Even so, now that Wiz seems like she's into it, it's not really our place to interfere. If you wish for her happiness, you should just let things take their course..."

Aqua reluctantly sunk into silence upon hearing Megumin's words.

—After Vanir gave Duke his glowing endorsement, Wiz deliberated for some time before saying that she'll handle this soon and headed back to work.

In other words, it's now a problem between the two of them. As outsiders, we shouldn't interfere.

But...

"...I'll test that man."

Aqua said, her eyes brimming with determination.

"What do you mean by test? What exactly are you planning to do?"

I couldn't help but ask, and Aqua confidently answered,

"I'm going to test if that man is truly a devoted and earnest man. Yes, I'll seduce him."

...Huh?

"A-Are you insane? You don't even know the first thing about romance, and you want to seduce that man? Are you serious?"

Nevermind that man, you can't even seduce a random person off the streets.

"Who do you think I am? I'm the goddess with ten million devotees of the Axis Cult,

the extremely popular Aqua-sama! I'm well-loved by the neighbourhood kids, and even an old man gave me sweets recently. If I give these two a little bit of instruction, that man will easily fall before us."

Where are you getting that confidence from?

...Wait, hold on, give these two a little bit of instruction?

Ignoring my inner doubts, Aqua continued with what seemed to be even more confidence than before.

"After all, we have the Loli Killer who is extremely seductive towards anyone whose preferences leans that way, and Eroness who can take care of anyone who appreciates a more lewd figure. If he can avoid being led astray by the seductions of these two, I'll acknowledge him."

"Wait, is that Loli Killer me? I won't do something so stupid! Even if it is to test that man's devotion, I am a devoted and principled woman too! I already have Kazuma, so I'm not seducing anyone else!"

"Stop making it sound like I'm in charge of all things lewd! I feel like the way you guys are treating me is getting worse by the day! I'm a little bit angry at myself for enjoying that kind of treatment..."

Aqua ignored the objections of those two,

"Those two are inexperienced with matters of romance, but I'll properly instruct them, so don't worry! Just watch, I'll prove that my intuition wasn't wrong!"

"I'm not doing it, okay? I'll definitely not do it! Are you listening to me, Aqua!?"

Megumin declared to me as she violently shook Aqua.

Part 3

At a small bar that could be said to be at the edge of town, a beautiful woman appeared.

That woman could be described as bewitching. Wearing an expensive dress that seemed most out of place in this cheap bar, the woman approached the robed man who was enjoying a drink alone.

“May I sit next to you?”

“...If you’re here to solicit me, I’m not interested.”

The smile that the woman tried so hard to put on froze on her face.

...Yes, the woman who approached the lonely robed man – Duke – is Darkness acting on the instructions of Aqua.

“Hey, Aqua, she dressed up and put on makeup and everything, only to end up getting mistaken for a prostitute and dismissed... pfft.”

“Don’t laugh, Kazuma, we’ll be discovered... pfft.”

I don’t know if Darkness heard our voices, but her face slowly turned redder.

This is the bar that I once ran into Duke before.

Aqua and I were seated some distance away from the two, using the Lurk skill to blend in together with the customers and ready to bail Darkness out in the event that Duke really does start hitting on her.

Of course, Darkness failed at the very first step...

“She got all fired up and said that all nobles are well -versed in the art of cajoling men and what not when I told her that it was impossible for her... Hahaha.”

“Very well, this is for Wiz’s sake. I’ll show you the glamour of a noble lady.’ she said. Ah, she was really cool back then.”

Darkness was quite opposed to the idea at first.

She even said such troublesome lines like ‘Don’t you feel anything about me hitting on other men?’, but when I said I wanted to experience what that famous NTR really felt like, she suddenly got really into it and eagerly agreed to help Aqua.

Seems like my words were very persuasive to a pervert like her.

By the way, Megumin ran off somewhere before Aqua could even begin to persuade her.

Just when we were whispering to each other, Darkness seemed to remember her original purpose and regained her original, gentle smile.

She let out a small chuckle and continued,

“You are really funny. I’m not a woman of the night. I’m an owner of a small store here in Axel; the name is Lalati-”

“Hey, isn’t that Darkness? What are you doing here with a dress like that? This isn’t a shop fit for nobility, you know? Hey, Lady of the Dustiness house, now that you’re here, why don’t you treat me to a drink?”

The blonde-haired delinquent adventurer suddenly butted into the conversation.

Come to think of it, he was here back then too, right? Seems like he was a regular in this store.

“...Have you mistaken me for someone else? I am-”

“What are you talking about, Lalatina? It’s me, Dust! We’ve adventured together and gone through a lot of other stuff too! Don’t tell me you’ve forgotten about that!”

Darkness turned her back on Duke who was looking interestedly at the two, and slipped Dust a small pouch of money.

Dust seemed a little unhappy for getting chased off like that, but he still took the money and left the scene.

Darkness flashed a wide smile in an attempt to smooth things over.

“...There are always such people who come up to pester you after claiming to have met

you somewhere before, aren't there?"

"So, what does the Lady of the Dustiness family want with me?"

Welp, that's it. The jig is up.

Aqua and I moved to a corner visible only to Darkness, and started making 'give up' and 'come back' hand signals at her.

But Darkness merely bit her lip after seeing us.

"Seemed like I pushed my joke a little too far. I'll introduce myself once again. My name is Dustiness ford Lalatina, the daughter of the Lord of this town and an adventurer."

Seems like she intends to continue as planned after her true identity is revealed.

Sitting next to Duke, Darkness gave a gracious smile towards the barkeeper.

"Please give this man and I a glass of the best red wine in this bar."

"There's no way such a cheap bar like mine would serve red wine, Dustiness-sama."

"Don't laugh, Kazuma! It can't be helped! Darkness is a noble lady, so she doesn't frequent such stores!"

"Then why are you laughing!? Don't do that, I won't be able hold it in either!"

Facing not just ours, but the laughter of everyone in the bar, Darkness blushed all the way to her ears.

"Then, just give me the most expensive item in this store..."

"A barrel of ice -cold Crimson beer, right? Thank you for your patronage!"

Following Darkness's order, the barkeeper brought out a barrel along with a mug.

Its completely over. Everything she does just makes things worse.

"...Wow, can you really drink this much?"

“...I thought I would treat everyone in this bar to a drink to celebrate our meeting...”

Darkness said softly, seemingly deflating by the second.

— After watching our fill of the scene, we, along with Darkness who extradited herself from the impromptu party that the bar turned into, walked back home under the night sky.

“I won’t ever do something like this again! Damn you Duke, how dare you embarrass a noble like me so!”

Darkness angrily grumbled as she removed the white gloves she was wearing.

“You brought it all on by yourself. Duke didn’t do anything... Pfft!”

“Hey Kazuma, Darkness didn’t catch his interest even after everything she did! If you laugh at her too, it’d be way too pitiful! Darkness, I think you did pretty well. Especially that line about celebrating our meeting and starting a drinking party! If someone said that to me, I’d definitely show them one of my special party tricks.”

“AAAAAAH!”

Darkness finally crumbled, buried her face in her hands, and screamed.

Afterwards, she looked up at us with a tear-stained face.

“But that man, he wasn’t swayed at all by my seduction or my status... I didn’t misjudge him. He’s completely different from a certain easily seduced someone. He’s gained a little more of my respect...”

Hearing Darkness say that with a serious tone, Aqua too assumed a serious expression-

“So, Kazuma, did you experience the glamour of a noble lady?”

“Sadly, I did not. That was the supposed art of cajoling men that all nobles are well - versed in. Was it helpful for you?”

I answered with an equally serious expression, and Darkness threw her gloves at me.

“I’ll fucking kill you!”

As we were running away from Darkness, who finally snapped, I shouted towards Aqua.

“Idiot, you went too far! She is really angry now!”

“Waaah! You were the one who made her snap, so you do something about this!”

“I’m not angry at either one of you, but both of you! You’ll just make things worse if you run! I’ll teach the two of you a good lesson before we return to the mansion!”

Part 4

Next morning.

The first thing I saw after returning to the mansion was Aqua hard at work in the yard.

“So you dare shamelessly walk back in, you runaway NEET! Darkness ground my temples into dust yesterday, you know?”

Darkness was just way too scary after she snapped, so I ran away with my Escape skill and spent the night outside.

“Nevermind me, isn’t there something strange growing in your field?”

“Don’t try and change the subject. I sacrificed myself to soothe Darkness’s anger in your place, so show some more gratitude to me.”

Ignoring Aqua’s grumbling, I crouched down in the field.

Growing right there is a figure-sized little girl.

“Hey, did you actually plant a mandrake here? It’ll become a really big problem if it starts screaming in the middle of town, you know? Didn’t you say you will wait till next year to plant mandrakes?”

“The seeds were cheap, so I bought them, but it shouldn’t have sprouted so soon. Still, just what is this girl? I feel like I’ve seen her somewhere before. Only plant-type monsters would grow so rapidly, but...”

I realized what it was after hearing Aqua’s words.

“Hey, isn’t this a Tranquility Girl?! Why the hell did you plant one here?!”

“W-Wait, I just planted the seeds that the traveling salesman sold me! He was selling the seeds really cheaply too! There’s no way such a kind man would sell me a monster seed!”

This idiot!

“The seeds are cheap *because* it’s a monster seed! Are you not satisfied with buying a chicken egg in place of a dragon’s egg!? Now you want to raise a useless monster too!?”

“Emperor Zell isn’t a chicken! Anyway, what should we do with this girl? Darkness will definitely get angry if she learns that we planted a monster!”

We probably made too much noise.

“...Good morning, Kazuma. So you dare shamelessly walk back in, huh?”

Turning towards the source of the voice, I saw Darkness putting on her sandals as she prepared to walk into the yard.

“Kazuma, Darkness is coming this way! Do something about this kid!”

“Well, I don’t really care if that Tranquility Girl gets killed...”

Aqua started hitting me with the bottom of her hand as I prepared to run away.

“You devil! You really are a devil NEET! Don’t you feel anything for this newly -born life!?”

“Why don’t you share some of that compassion with actual devils and the undead!? Ah, dammit, she’s here!”

We stood in front of the Tranquility Girl in order to hide her from the sight of the approaching Darkness.

“Sorry, Darkness, it was my fault! I took things too far yesterday! I’m sorry, so please forgive me!”

“Yeah, Darkness, let bygones be bygones. Anyway, I’ll make a delicious breakfast for you, so let’s head back in!”

Hearing that, a distrustful expression appeared on Darkness’s face.

Leaving me who immediately apologized aside, Aqua’s behaviour is definitely suspicious.

After all, Aqua would normally say something like ‘You got so angry at me yesterday,

so you need to let him experience the same thing,' and the like to drag me down with her.

Shifting her distrustful expression from Aqua to me, Darkness asked,

"...So, what exactly did you do?"

"Hey, why are you looking at me? The number of problems I've caused should be countable on one hand!"

Darkness shifted her gaze to my side after hearing my words, and Aqua immediately averted her gaze.

I've felt this way for a while now, but this girl really is way too bad at hiding things.

"What on earth did you do this time!? Hurry up and tell me!"

"Why does everyone immediately think I'm the culprit whenever something goes wrong?! I really don't think it's good to be so prejudiced towards others!"

Saying that, Aqua pushed on Darkness's chest as if she wanted her to leave.

"H-Hey, why do you want me to leave this place so badly?!"

Darkness struggled with Aqua in order to resist her pushes, and her gaze suddenly fell to what was behind Aqua...

"...Hey."

"That's not it!"

Ignoring Aqua's fervent denial, Darkness continued with a serious expression.

"Aqua, isn't that a Tranquility Girl..."

"No, that is just a cute little mandrake that sprouted quickly! I did buy a mandrake seed this time!"

I really don't know if a Tranquility Girl or a mandrake would be more dangerous, but Darkness pushed past Aqua and screamed,

“You planted that here? In the first place, a mandrake isn’t any less dangerous than a Tranquility Girl! Move, Aqua! I’ll take care of it before it develops sentience! I won’t tolerate any discussion!”



Darkness rolled up her sleeves and moved to uproot the Tranquility Girl.

Well, yeah, this is only to be expected.

There's no way we can raise a monster in town, so the only option is to kill it. Aqua didn't plant it here on purpose, but we can at least grant it a swift end...

"No, stop! I already gave a name to her! I thought she was a mandrake, so I named her Deadscream Bloody Mary-"

"Giving a mandrake a name like that means that you know exactly how dangerous they are, you idiot! To think I even sympathised with you! Darkness, hurry up and end it!"

Just as I moved to grind my knuckles into Aqua's temples,

"Good morning. You guys sure are lively this morning too. What happened this time?"

A mud-covered Megumin appeared at the door.

Part 5

After taking a bath, Megumin heartily dug into her breakfast while letting her body cool down.

“Just where did you run off to, Megumin? I didn’t think you hated the idea of seducing that guy so much that you’d rather camp out in the wilds. I wouldn’t have forced you to go through with it, so don’t go to such dangerous places anymore, okay?”

“That’s not it. Just what kind of a barbarian do you think I am? It’s true that I left because I didn’t want to seduce that man, but there’s a proper reason for why I’m so covered in mud.”

Megumin let out a deep breath and wiped her mouth, seemingly having calmed down after having a meal.

“So what’s the reason? Did you find a monster worth a lot of experience points and chase after it? Or did you chase after the children after they made fun of your name?”

“Just what do you think I am!? There isn’t any child around here who would make fun of my name anymore. I made sure to teach all of them a lesson.”

“H-Hey, the parents around town have been coming to me to complain about your actions, you know? I have to apologize for you every time, so please keep that in mind and don’t do that sort of thing anymore, okay?”

Darkness uneasily said.

Megumin explained what happened to her over a pot of tea.

“Well, I didn’t really have any place to go after running away from home last night. I thought I’d be able to meet some adventurers I know, so I wandered around town for a bit...”

Seems like Megumin was unable to meet any adventurer she recognised with after wandering aimlessly around the town last night. So, she headed towards the adventurer’s guild because she thought that there should be a couple of familiar faces there...

“I came across Yunyun who was desperately trying to recruit others who would undertake that trial with her, so I lent her my aid once again.”

“Yeah, I think I know what happens next, so you can stop there.”

I tried to interrupt her, but Megumin continued with sparkling eyes,

“Listen to me, Kazuma. I have the ability to learn, you know? Last time I undertook the trial, the first riddle was too troublesome, so I ended up blowing it up with magic. This time, in order to prevent myself from letting loose in a fit of rage, I entrusted my staff to Yunyun and was only there to be her follower.”

“Oh?”

Seems like this girl who only knew how to seek the limelight has matured a little.

“But, leaving Yunyun who failed the last trial aside, I’m now forbidden from being a partner after destroying the trial grounds the first time. So, after discussing it with Yunyun last night, we formulated a plan to sneak into the trial under cover of night.”

No, scratch that, she’s still as immature as ever. She’s still coming up with all kinds of ridiculous plans.

“After splitting up in the woods, we arrived at the newly constructed trial grounds without issue. This time, we properly tried to solve the riddle. After all, there’s the number one genius of the Crimson Demons and the one who claims to be that genius’s rival at the scene. Problems involving intelligence like riddles should be a cinch with the both of us.”

“I can’t help but get a bad feeling about this.”

Megumin quickly averted her gaze as if to support my expectations.

“Come to think of it, I don’t think either of us have properly studied anything since graduating from school... The magic item refused to accept our answers no matter how many times we attempted it, so I got fed up and took my staff back from Yunyun... Perhaps because it was night when we attempted the trial, but the monsters started gathering after hearing the sound...”

“...I’ll ask just in case, but you didn’t get found out by the people in the village, did you?”

I tentatively asked, and Megumin flashed me a triumphant look.

“Who do you think I am? As we were running away from the monsters, the people from the village started rushing over after hearing the sound of the explosion! Yunyun used Teleport to transport us to the village, so we managed to slip past them and made ourselves dinner while we waited for them to come back! But I underestimated the magical knowledge of the Crimson Demons. They somehow knew that I was the culprit by the next day, and asked me to compensate for the magic item...”

“Well, of course! Your Explosion is the most definitive evidence in the world! What magical knowledge?! You are the only Crimson Demon who can use Explosion!”

Megumin apologetically handed me the bill for the cost of the magic item, and I handed over enough money to cover the costs to her.

“Sorry, Kazuma. I’ll make sure not to leave any traces behind next time.”

“I feel like you’re taking away the wrong lesson from this whole incident. You shouldn’t be doing this in the first place!”

As Megumin finished the tea I brewed,

“So, what exactly happened with you guys?”

She asked while tilting her head.

Part 6

“W-What should we do?”

“What else is there to do? This is as much your fault as it is Aqua’s. You did make the field together with her.”

Megumin said in a wavering voice after seeing the newly sprouted Tranquility Girl.

“Yeah, but I didn’t expect there to be monster seeds mixed in...”

Megumin started mumbling excuses.

“Kazuma, I’ll properly raise this girl. The reason why the other Tranquility Girls grew up to be bad apples is definitely because they were raised in a bad environment. If she is raised by a pure-hearted person who showers her with love, she’ll definitely grow up to be a good kid.”

Aqua pulled on my clothes and said such things...

“Enough. Aqua, Tranquility Girls are monsters. They are dangerous monsters that cause multiple deaths-.”

“Oh, yeah, we can raise it! Not bad, Aqua! You’re really smart today!”

I loudly interrupted Darkness as she tried to convince Aqua.

I thought of a really great idea!

“What, did you think of a great idea? I knew it, Kazuma-san always comes through at times like this! Hurry up and tell me!”

Aqua excitedly said to me, and I returned the smile and explained,

“Right, listen up, Aqua. First, we’ll raise this Tranquility Girl. Then, we’ll plant more of them. Tranquility Girls are monsters that convince travellers to rest by them before letting them wither away, right? That means that they have low offensive power. Still, they are worth a lot of experience points. So, if we have a field full of them, we’ll be able to easily level up-”

“I was a fool to even rely on you in the first place, you shitty NEET! Just which pit did you dump your humanity in? Even I’m taken aback!”

And she suddenly started dissing me.

“Hey, wait, isn’t there a leveling method where strong Crimson Demons immobilize monsters so that weaker Crimson Demons can deal the finishing blow and level up that way? I was a little taken aback when I heard about it, but isn’t this the same thing? You were the guys constantly pestering me to raise my level!”

“The leveling method passed down through the Crimson Demons involves risking life and limb in order to immobilize strong monsters in the first place! Don’t compare it to this rule-breaking leveling up method!”

“Y-Yeah, this method may be effective, but this is just too inhumane...”

Great, everyone is against it.

I thought they’d be able to accept it because they know that Tranquility Girls are devious from the moment they are planted.

Even though they suffered immensely at the hands of the Tranquility Queen too...

“Say, let’s leave this matter aside for the moment. More importantly is that man who dumped Darkness in a wonderful manner last night.”

“A-Aqua, can you please, don’t keep saying that I’ve been dumped...”

Ignoring the depressed Darkness, Aqua confidently declared,

“Now that Darkness, the one in charge of all things lewd has failed, the next assassin is Lolimin. If he can withstand both of their attempts, I’ll have no choice but to acknowledge him.”

“I’ve said it multiple times, but I definitely will not do that! And don’t call me Lolimin! If you are willing to go that far, how about you stop standing on the sidelines and do it yourself!?”

Hearing that, Aqua slammed a fist into her hand.

“Yeah, that can work. If he can resist the charms of the beautiful and lovely Aqua-san, then his feelings must be quite determined indeed. Very well, Darkness might have failed, but I’ll have him dancing to my tune in no time!”

“Say, it’s a little thick-skinned of me to say this myself, but I don’t think I’m worse than Aqua as a woman. Hey, Aqua, you just snickered, didn’t you? Hold it right there, just how low do you place me in your mind!?”

Part 7

That night.

We came to the bar that I've visited who knows how many times by now, and were sitting at a corner table to watch over them.

"I still don't believe that Aqua has the ability to seduce a man. In the first place, she's the woman furthest away from any concept of romance."

Darkness repeatedly nodded in agreement to my words.

"Well, Aqua does look beautiful, so we can't say for certain... But, yeah, her personality is a little..."

"Still, Aqua included, we've all been hit on when we visited other cities. We have a bit of an unfair reputation in this town, so no one dares to approach us, but normal people will fall right for us beautiful girls... W-what, Kazuma? Why do you look like you're holding back laughter?"

I activated my Lurk skill while listening to Megumin's protests in order to avoid attracting attention.

And I activated my Lip-Reading skill in order to follow the conversation between Aqua and Duke.

Today, instead of her usual divine hagoromo, Aqua is dressed like a normal village girl.

Under our gaze, Aqua unsteadily tottered over to where Duke was sitting.

Judging from her confident demeanour and the looks she's sending over to me, this is probably her idea of a sexy walk.

"Hey, handsome-looking onii-chan drinking alone over there, you have the same air of loneliness as the shitty NEET at home. Can I have a moment of your time?"

Aqua made contact with the target, and mixed in some very rude sounding lines into her opening speech.

Just as I quickly conveyed those lines to Megumin and the others, Duke turned around with an annoyed face, only to freeze upon seeing Aqua.

I can understand the sentiment. It's the same kind of feeling as coming across a strange animal.

Perhaps mistaking that reaction for something else, Aqua was all smiles as she took a seat next to Duke.

"Oh, were you surprised by how beautiful onee-chan is? Fufu, how cute. The truth is, I have something very interesting to tell you. So, would you like to hear it?"

Is she trying to assume an older onee-san character?

Seems like that's Aqua's idea of a good woman.

Including that line, everything about her make her seem like a suspicious saleswoman. Does she really think she can seduce someone like that?

But, when I saw Duke's reply, I started suspecting that I may be seeing things.

"...Oh, something interesting?... I see. Very well, I'll play along. Barkeep, give this woman a cold one."

Are you insane!?

Why is that man accepting the offer of that suspicious-looking organism?

"Oh, thanks. Usually the NEET I'm raising will treat me to a drink, but unfortunately he isn't present today."

I'm going to make her cry when we get back.

Actually, she might have already forgotten that we are right here, watching over her.

Just when I was interpreting their conversation for Megumin and Darkness, I heard a clattering noise.

Looking next to me, I noticed that the both of them were pale-faced and trembling.

“Y-You’re lying... You’re lying, right, Kazuma? That man rejected me without even looking twice. Why would he treat Aqua to a drink... D-Do I really have less sex appeal than Aqua? Aqua always acts like an airhead and doesn’t give off the appeal of a woman at all, but could it be that men like that kind of woman...?”

“C-Calm down, Darkness! He’s just treating her to a drink right now! Aqua gets treated to a drink pretty often, so this isn’t anything unusual!”

Just as the two of them were shaking to a degree that I never thought was humanly possible, Aqua and Duke were chatting it up.

“So, what is this interesting thing you wanted to tell me?”

“Fufu, you’re a hasty one. Very well, I’ll tell you. I heard this from my neighbour Sutton-san. If you stick your finger into the butt of a stray neroid, it’ll let out a far louder *nyaa* than usual. You didn’t know this, did you?”

“...Is that some kind of code? Or is she speaking a different language?”

Duke seems to be seriously listening to it, but do I really have to interpret this crazy conversation of theirs?

“Ka-Kazuma, what are they saying? He seems very interested in what Aqua has to say...”

“Hey, Kazuma, not only my sex appeal, but is my skill at wordplay also lacking compared to Aqua? It’s not like I was really comparing myself to her, but this is still a little shocking...”

Continuing to interpret this conversation to Megumin and Darkness would just make me feel dumb, so I focused on catching their conversation.

“Then did you know about this? Even though the Pink-Shelled Mirumiru has the word ‘shell’ in its name, it’s actually a relative of the sea anemone. In an emergency, it will twist its body in an imitation of a conical shell, and drill its way through the water at high speed. Ah, but you probably don’t know what a drill is, right?”

What’s a Shelled Mirumiru in the first place? Why is she loaded up on these kinds of useless knowledge?

In the first place, what the hell kind of nonsense is she saying? Is that the flirting technique of a goddess that she was so proud of?

“My apologies, but I have not heard that word before. In fact, I can only understand perhaps half of what you just told me, but you do not seem to be lying or attempting to trick me. I can’t detect a shred of wickedness from you. Whenever humans spout a lie, no matter how small a lie it is, they will definitely let out an aura of wickedness. From just that point alone, you appear to be exceptionally pure to me.”

“Oh, why would I ever tell a lie? Still, you have a pretty good eye. You’re a fantastic judge of people, especially when it comes to women.”

“I’m quite confident in grasping a man’s true nature.”



Are you sure you aren't blind?

I wanted to say that to him right now, but what the hell is going on?

Is Duke judging people through some form of supernatural technique, like seeing a person's divine aura or something like that?

Probably thinking that the mood is right, Aqua broached upon the main topic.

"Still, it's such a waste. You have such a good eye, but you choose to fall in love with a corpse. I've heard that you are in love with an undead."

"What!? Me, love an undead? How preposterous! There's nothing I hate more in the world than undead and devils!"

...Eh?

"Hey, what happened, Kazuma? What are they talking about?"

"You suddenly turned really pale. Did that man say something?"

Wait, hold on, that has to be some kind of mistake...

"Well, aren't you a sensible man!? Yes, undead and devils are meant to be eradicated on sight! Especially devils! Just catching a whiff of their scent make my stomach churn!"

"Well said! Devils irritate me on a base level. Just why must such creatures exist in this world... That goddess Eris must be slacking in her job."

Eh? Did the conversation just take a strange turn just now?

The image of him I had in my head is slowly...!

"It can't be helped. That Eris can't do anything without the backing of her capable senior. Go ahead and relay this should the topic come up. Oh, and I'll tell you some very useful information. Eris pads her chest. This is a very important piece of information that is written in the scriptures of the Axis Cult. Go ahead and spread it."

"Eris pads her chests... Hahahaha, I've learned a very interesting piece of information!"

If I ever get the chance to see Goddess Eris again, I'll be sure to tease her with this."

"Hey, Kazuma, explain things! They sound like they are really chatting up a storm!"

"Aqua looks like she's enjoying herself more than she ever had before. Are the two of them alright?"

How are the two of them having such a great time talking about such ridiculous topics?

"It's been quite some time since I had so much fun talking about undead and devils! I would love to treat you, but sadly, I've run out of pocket money."

"What are you saying? Of course I'll be handling the tab! Now, drink up!"

There's no way I can accept that Aqua is actually popular amongst men.

"Kazuma! That man is ordering a whole bunch of drinks for Aqua! Doesn't that mean I'm completely defeated?"

"Darkness, as Aqua said, we're children. This is reality!"

I wordlessly stared at this completely absurd sight.

"Then let's drink till we drop!"

Chapter 5

Sincere love for this Lich!

Part 1

Aqua came back in the morning.

“That Duke guy is really fun to be around. I had a really great time last night.”

And that was the first thing to come out of her mouth.

“A-A-Aqua has become an adult...”

“That’s not it, Megumin, Aqua has been an adult from the very beginning.”

Ignoring the two of them looking at Aqua in awe, I asked her about the events of the previous night.

“So, what happened last night? It turned into a drinking party before we knew it, so we gave up and went home. Coming back in the morning... You didn’t get into an adult relationship with him, did you?”

“What are you saying now? I’m a respectable adult, you know? Of course we played some adult games together.”

Is this girl serious!?

“We played the game where we rolled dice in a bowl and determined the victor based on what came up. I lost every game, though. We also played a card game that I didn’t really get. I lost every game, though.”

Is this girl serious?

“Oh, I didn’t have any money on me, so I paid off my debt with my body.”

“Are you serious!?”

I couldn't suppress it anymore and shouted.

"Well, it's more like I used my head to pay it off. I told him interesting things in lieu of payment."

"Y-You..."

Aqua extended her right hand,

"I told him various things like which types of shellfish are good to eat or what kind of flowers have sweet nectar, but that wasn't enough. So, Kazuma-san, it was a necessary expense, so could you give me the money to pay it off?"

"Stop saying things that can be easily mistaken. You really gave me a shock just now."

I handed over a small bag filled with coins, and Aqua happily accepted it.

"...That's the money to pay off your debts. Don't say you're going to win all your money back and gamble it all away."

"...Kazuma, there's a thing known as cycles when it comes to gambling. I've already lost a lot of games. That means that there's no chance I'll lose again. So leave it in my care."

"Right, give it back to me. I'll give it to Duke directly."

Just as we started struggling over the bag of money,

"So, what do you think about that Duke fellow? He feels quite different from the earnest image I had of him a few days ago."

"Hmm, well, I feel like he's a mature man who understands the value of a good woman. He's easy to handle for someone as experienced as me, but it might be a little too tough for a child like Wiz. But he hates devils and the undead, so he can't be a bad person."

"No, hold on, the fact that he hates undead is a major problem in itself. Is this really okay?"

Aqua let out a confident smile-

“It’ll be fine. Wiz might be an undead, but she’s especially hygienic and doesn’t reek of rot, so it wouldn’t matter to him.”

“I don’t know why, but... Kazuma, after hearing Aqua give her glowing recommendation, I just end up feeling more suspicious about that man.”

What a coincidence. I feel the same way.

“Still, all we did is investigate what kind of man he is. What comes next is up to Wiz. Plus, all he did was share a couple of drinks and get rowdy with Aqua. I often do the same thing with the female adventurers I know, so it doesn’t mean he’s an unfaithful or sloppy man.”

“That’s pretty unfaithful and sloppy from where I stand...”

Megumin stared at me with a displeased look, causing me to flinch.

“Duke gave me a message to pass on to Wiz when I told him I’m an acquaintance of her. Don’t worry, anyone who hates devils can’t be a bad person! Now, let’s head to the magic item shop!”

The strangely excited Aqua declared.

Part 2

When we entered the shop, for some reason, the penguin was manning the counter.

“Sacred Highness Exorcism!”

“Piyaaaa!”

“Stop purifying Zereschrute every time you come here! It’s not exactly easy to revive him!”

Vanir angrily screamed as he saw Aqua fire off her purification magic on sight once again.

Seems like Aqua has taken a liking to purifying that penguin.

“Nevermind such matters right now! I have a message for Wiz, so call her out!”

“If you’re looking for Wiz, she’s out back talking to a flower. To be honest, it’s disgusting to even look at her. Moi really wishes she can hurry up and settle this matter so Moi wouldn’t have to deal with this anymore.”

Vanir pointed to the back of the shop as he revived the penguin.

Aqua rushed over while holding what appeared to be a letter in her hand.

“Say, Vanir, you saw through that Duke guy, right? Why did you praise him so much back then? I thought he was a pretty manly person, but he said something about hating devils and the undead. What’s up with that?”

“It’ll spoil the fun if Moi were to tell you right now, wouldn’t it? Fuhahahaha! Moi does not tell lies. It’s just as Moi said. When that lovestruck shopkeeper responds to that man’s wishes, a man will experience delight and merriment to a degree never before seen in this world. There’s no mistake in that. Devils do not tell lies, so just look forward to it!”

Vanir seemed really happy for some reason. Just looking at him act like this gave me a serious sense of foreboding.

Duke is a man who's praised by both Aqua and a devil.

Something just feels really wrong.

Just then, the penguin slowly inflated as he came back to life. Megumin regarded that scene with interest and said,

"By the way, why is that penguin manning the store? Did you hire him?"

"No, that storekeeper was useless in the first place, but she became even more useless after getting lovestruck. So, Moi thought to use Zereschrute with his cute-looking exterior to man the store, but... you can see how troublesome that ended up being."

Hearing Vanir's words, Megumin tilted her head.

"Come to think of it, I haven't gave you my name yet, right?... My name is Megumin! The number one mage in Axel and wielder of Explosion Magic! Please be careful not to get purified by Aqua and lose your insides again."

"Oh, greetings, young lady of the Crimson Demons. My name is Zereschrute. You seem to be a frequent customer of this store, so please take care of me."

As Megumin shook hands with the tiny flippers of Zereschrute, a slightly displeased expression appeared upon her face.

"It's Megumin. Don't call me young lady, use my name. Or do you have something to say about this cool name of mine?"

"N-No, not at all, but... Names are very important to us devils, so we only address others by name if we highly respect them..."

The girl who's always been sensitive about her name drew closer to Zereschrute-

"But didn't you properly refer to our Darkness as Lady Dustiness?"

"T-That's because I recognise Lady Dustiness as a respectable noble, that's why..."

Darkness blushed with joy after receiving Zereschrute's praise. At the same time, Aqua came back with Wiz and said in a tired voice,

“I’m back...”

Aqua seemed really drained for some reason.

And as for Wiz...

“Ara, welcome, Kazuma-san.”

She had a strangely dreamy yet joyous expression on her face.

“– I’ve been seriously thinking about it. Should I answer Duke-san’s feelings, or continue working hard at this store to make Vanir-san’s dreams a reality...”

“Moi has said it many times, if you get married, the store’s business will only pick up.”

Ignoring Vanir’s words, Wiz teared up and sighed in an exaggerated manner reminiscent of a heroine from a tragic romance.

“Aah, all I did was spend everyday peacefully managing this store, so how did it end up like this? Aqua-sama, what should I do? Vanir-san needs me, but...”

“What Moi needs is your magic, not your management expertise.”

Once again ignoring Vanir’s words, Wiz placed her palm against the window as she looked upon the scenery outside.

“But Duke-san doesn’t just need me, he can’t live without me. He even said that he can’t imagine life without me...”

“No, wait, I’m pretty sure he didn’t go that far...”

“He even said that! What should I do, Aqua-sama? Which path should I choose...”

Completely ignoring my response, Wiz clung onto the somewhat tired-looking Aqua and whispered.

“Erm, that person seems like a pretty good guy, so it’s probably fine to go with him.”

“Is that so!? Aqua-sama thinks he’s a good man too!? Why would such a man be...”

Wiz said while softly giggling to herself.

“What’s wrong with Wiz? Did you feed her something strange?”

“Don’t say such heartless things. Moi has been concerned about her current state, so Moi has been giving her some proper food recently... But for some reason, this crazy shopkeeper got this strange idea that Moi has been treating her better in order to keep her in the shop.”

You have it pretty hard too, huh?

“I see. So you left her alone and she ended up like this.”

“There you have it. Right now, she spends all day with her head in the clouds. Though, she doesn’t buy any strange goods in this state, so she doesn’t get in the way of business... To us devils, psychological attacks are more effective than any kind of magic...”

And the person in question seemed to be completely unaware of our conversation, instead shooting meaningful glances at Vanir as if she was signalling him to fawn over her.

The devil let out a very human-like sigh, and said towards the strangely festive Wiz,

“Shopkeeper in heat, that letter is asking you out to meet with him, right? Hurry up and go settle this, then return to the usual you and fulfill the contract you have with me!”

Hearing that, Wiz,

“...Does that mean, even though I am good for nothing but creating red digits, you still want me to continue being the shopkeeper?”

“You won’t listen even if I tell you to transfer the position over to me.”

Vanir had a scowl on his face as he said that, but this is the first time he has expressed his intentions.

He still wants Wiz to continue being the shopkeeper.

That can only mean one thing.

“You really are a tsundere, Vanir-san.”

“How could a genderless devil be a tsundere? Stop saying disgusting things and go. Moi is the devil that sees through all, but after knowing you for so long, Moi doesn’t need to use my power to know what choice you’ll take. You might face a tough struggle, but don’t worry, you’ll definitely win. Moi is going out to receive some goods...”

He probably already knows what will happen next and how this will end up.

This self-proclaimed devil that sees through all, the duke of hell with a twisted personality...

“Once I’m done with that, I’ll be sure to rush to the scene. Moi has grown quite fond of you, so go have fun today, then, wipe out all the red numbers that you created. You fought with me on equal grounds back when you were still a human. There’s no way you can lose to a man of his caliber... Now, hurry up and go!”

An unblemished smile appeared upon Wiz’s face.

“Roger!”

Part 3

The place where Duke wants to meet Wiz is written in the letter.

That would be a cemetery outside of town.

No matter how you look at it, it's not a place you would choose for a confession.

And there's Vanir's parting words. Those lines sounded more like he was sending Wiz off to the battlefield than anything else.

I thought back to Duke's words as we made our way over.

Actually, I've been getting a feeling that something is off.

It felt like I'm missing a piece of a puzzle, or like a button has been left undone.

If I recall, Duke said this back then.

"Now, that's enough talk! Ice Witch, let's have a duel!"

And afterwards, he said this...

"Why? Isn't that obvious? It's to demonstrate my power to you and have you give up your current job!"

Yeah, that's how he proposed to her.

...Propose?

Hold on a second.

Is that really a proposal?

Wiz got really frantic after she heard that. If I recall, she replied.

"Y-You want me to marry you..."

...He didn't say it.

Wiz assumed that it was the case, but Duke didn't say anything about that himself.

And, this should be what he said at the end.

"Leave your work to me! Then, let's do this, you-!"

Wiz teleported at that very instant, so things were left unsettled.

...Doesn't this seem off?

-We made our way towards the designated spot as I thought.

"Hey, Wiz, that Duke guy treated me to a drink yesterday."

"Eeh?! W-What do you mean, Aqua-sama?! Didn't everyone say that he's a sincere and honest man?"

This is just a proposal.

It's a simple confession.

"Well, I thought to test if he really is a sincere person. He couldn't resist the invitation of the beautiful me, and we ended up drinking till morning. But don't worry, he didn't do anything that could be mistaken for sexual harassment, and I couldn't sense any of the wickedness that constantly hangs around Kazuma."

"I-Is that so... But I've already decided on my answer, so you don't have to worry, Aqua-sama."

Still, Vanir's attitude is worrisome.

I'm pretty sure he said this.

"When you respond to that man's feelings, a man will experience delight and merriment to a degree never before seen in this world."

...Normally, you would think that it means Duke and Wiz will achieve happiness together.

But would that Devil honestly give out advice that would result in people being happy?

“Oh? Well, it’s only natural for any man to fall for my charms, but he did push the erotic Darkness aside when she tried to seduce him. He can be said to be pretty sincere based off that.”

“I-Is that so...”

“Hey, Aqua! Stop using me as a standard for erotic matters!”

Megumin poked me in the back.

“What’s wrong? You seem to be deep in thought ever since you left the shop.”

“...No, it’s just, I have a really bad feeling for some reason... It’d be nice if it was just my imagination, but it feels like it wouldn’t be surprising if this ends in a bloodbath...”

Hearing that, Megumin giggled, as if to say ‘you’re worrying too much.’

“It’ll be fine. I don’t know how strong that Duke fellow is, but haven’t we defeated all the opponents we faced? Plus, we have the overwhelmingly powerful Lich, Wiz, with us today. And...”

She smiled to disperse my worries.

“No matter what kind of enemy we face, I’ll blow them away with my Explosion. I’ll protect you, so don’t worry.”

“Y-Yeah...”

I’m happy to hear her say that, but it’s a little different from what I’m worrying about...

Part 4

At a cemetery some distance away from Axel.

Come to think of it, this was the place where we first met Wiz.

I guess you could say it's a little romantic if seen through that lens...

"No, it really isn't."

"Where did that come from?"

Duke was already there when we arrived.

He was wearing that hooded robe he always wears. No matter how you look at it, it doesn't seem like he's here to propose.

Duke widened his eyes in surprise after seeing the people who accompanied Wiz.

"Leaving Satou Kazuma aside, there are quite a few people I recognise. There's the Lady of the Dustiness family... and isn't that the soulmate with whom I talked about Shelled Mirumirus until sunrise with..."

The hell is a Shelled Mirumiru?

And soulmate? You guys got real close to each other when I wasn't looking.

Duke gave Aqua an amicable look, but he quickly picked himself up and turned his gaze back to Wiz.

Unlike Duke, Wiz was dressed up in the fashionable dress she wore the other day.

"It's not really my place to say, but are you really fine with that dress?"

"I'm sorry to say that I'm not very well educated in such matters, but this is my best outfit..."

Duke nodded in response to Wiz's embarrassed reply.

"My apologies. I was sure that you were looking down on me."

“O-Of course not! You’re the first person who made me dress up like this... Umm, I’m not too used to it, so, sorry...”

Wiz slumped her shoulders and straightened her back, and a flash of surprise appeared on Duke’s face for an instant.

“I see. A skilled adventurer would usually be approached once or twice, but... It seems like you’re too famous. After hearing the name of the Ice Witch, most adventurers would be too afraid to even approach you, nevermind offer a challenge...”

“Y-yes! Yeah, that’s exactly it! Everyone was so afraid of me... Even though I wasn’t like that at all...”

“O-Oh, I see... I don’t really get it, but you have your own troubles as well, huh...”

Wiz sounded like she was on the verge of tears, and Duke seemed to be at a little of a loss after hearing that.

I heard about it from Vanir, but Wiz got so famous back when she was an adventurer that no one dared to hit on her.

Duke regained his composure and gave Wiz a fearless smile.

“Then shall we get started? I’m sure there’s no need for us to exchange any more words. Or do you intend to run like last time?”

Hearing Duke’s declaration, Wiz, who normally seemed so unsure of herself, said,

“I won’t run away. I intend to properly respond to your feelings today.”

“Oh?”

And placed her hands in front of her, staring at Duke with an unwavering gaze.



“I don’t wish to quit my current job. I have no intention of relinquishing my post. After all...”

In a slightly embarrassed tone,

“I made a promise with an irreplaceable, long time friend of mine.”

Wiz declared.

A confident smile appeared on Duke’s face as he heard that, and he returned Wiz’s gaze.

“The one known as the Ice Witch, and leader of the strongest adventuring party. Even after becoming undead, you still continue to pursue the path of magic. My name is Duke, the one who will eventually climb to the peaks of sorcery, just as you once did. King of Undead, Lich! I challenge you to a duel!”

He proudly named himself–

Part 5

“Inferno!”

“Freeze Gust!”

Blazing hot flames clashed against pure white fog in the open area next to the cemetery.

The fire magic unleashed by Duke collided with the ice magic unleashed by Wiz, and the results of that clash made some serious changes to the landscape.

Large parts of the ground were covered by white frost, and bits of the ground occasionally gurgled like they were being boiled.

Holy shit, this is an actual mage’s duel!

“Hey, Aqua, I’m really moved right now! Yes, this is what fantasy is! Vegetables flying around, catching mackerel in the fields, and monsters using erotic appeals to catch prey- those aren’t fantasy at all! This kind of actual magic is what isekai really is!”

“Hold on, Kazuma, you’re making it sound like Explosion isn’t real magic. Compared to such dull spells, isn’t Explosion much more amazing?”

I was so moved by this sight to the point where I started trembling, and Megumin threw a damper on things.

“The kind of magical battle I want to see is not the kind where you just throw a single blow at the enemy regardless of its strength. There’s no elegance in Explosion. There’s no balance or strategy, it’s just a massive gamble that hinges on if you hit the enemy or not.”

“What-!?”

Megumin seemed to be angry, but I couldn’t care less about her right now.

I need to carve this fantasy-styled battle I always wished for into my memory!

“Hmph. As expected of the Ice Witch. Crimson Laser!”

“Crystal Prison! Duke-san, please wait! Please, let’s talk things out!”

The crimson ray that Duke unleashed scattered upon hitting the lump of ice that Wiz conjured in front of her.

I’ve seen many different kinds of advanced spells when I visited the Crimson Demon village, but seeing two mages ferociously cast spells at each other in a duel still makes my spirit burn.

While enjoying this anime-like scene brought to life in front of me, I suddenly heard a familiar chant and immediately restrained Megumin.

“What are you trying to do!? Why can’t you just behave yourself during such an important moment!?”

“You were the one who showed more interest in such amateurish spells than my Explosion, Kazuma! I feel a really strong ache in my heart when I see your eyes sparkle while looking at another mage’s spells! It didn’t hurt this much even when you were about to fall for Darkness’s seduction!”

“Just what is wrong with your sense of jealousy!? This is a duel between the two of them, so don’t interfere and just watch!”

She probably wanted to use Explosion to steal their thunder.

I forcefully grabbed Megumin as she started chanting and pushed her to the ground.

Duke and Wiz moved around, using the trees as cover as they continued unleashing their spells at each other.

Well, no, it’s not really accurate to say that they both unleashed spells...

“Why aren’t you seriously attacking me!? Are you looking down on me!? Lava Swamp!”

“Freeze! Fire Resist! Ouch!... I have no desire to defeat you nor do I have any desire to give up my current job! Liches have high magic resistance! I’ll withstand any attacks you dish out and make you give up!”

A pit of lava appeared underneath Wiz, which she solidified in an instant with freeze before using fire resist magic to escape from the area of effect.

Compared to Duke who simply fired offensive spells one after another, Wiz is far more adept at using her spells.

“Say, Kazuma, as a Crusader, would it be better if I were to stop their duel? Wiz doesn’t seem very keen on this duel, so should I...”

“Bind! Shut up and just stay there! You just want to experience what advanced magic feels like, don’t you!?”

“Kuh...! Using bind on me in such a situation, you really know how to tug at my heartstrings...”

After binding up Darkness who was talking about putting a stop to this battle, I turned towards Wiz and shouted,

“Wiz! You should hurry up and get serious! It’d be rude to Duke otherwise!”

Show me a more intense battle!

“What are you saying, you idiot!? Stop messing around with Megumin and Darkness and hurry up and give Wiz some support!”

Aqua shouted at me, but from what I can see, Wiz is the stronger out of the two.

Since there’s no need to worry about her losing, then, as a gamer who has played many different games, I should focus on absorbing every single detail of this scene...

“Even if you say that, there’s no way I can seriously attack a man who is so passionate about me...”

Wiz shouted back with a conflicted expression.

Just then,

Duke, who had been desperately casting spells with a tense expression, nodded as though he had decided on something.

“You really are looking down on me! Very well, perhaps I should make you treat this seriously! How’s this? Sanctuary!”

As he said that, a huge magic circle, large enough to encompass the entire cemetery, appeared at his feet.

“Eeh? Ahhhhh!”

Wiz couldn’t prepare any defenses against the sudden attack and took it head on.

The softly floating motes of light produced by the magic circle flashed brightly whenever they came into contact with Wiz.

“Holy magic? Hey, Aqua, can Archmages use Holy Magic?”

“Of course not! The only ones who can use Holy Magic are Priests, Archpriests, and Crusaders. But wasn’t he using Advanced Magic earlier? How could he use Holy Magic too?”

Ignoring our questions, Duke glared at Wiz and pointed a hand at her.

Seems like he was focusing on the magic circle, for more motes of light poured out as he did that.

“Uugh!... Duke-san, please remember! Think back to the day we first met! You suddenly threw away your robe and approached me like you were trying to show me your naked body...”

“Don’t put it that way! There are other people watching, so I can’t remove it now, but there is a reason for that!”

If I recall, whenever Aqua used this same spell on Wiz, it almost purified her pretty much instantly.

It doesn’t seem like the holy magic that Duke is using is on the same level.

Wiz continued speaking while withstanding the light from the circle.

“Duke-san... ‘There’s nothing in my mind except you. I’ve trained my body for so long just for you!’ you said this on our next meeting, didn’t you? And you also said ‘I know everything about you! You could say that I am the man who understands you best in this world’...! Even if it’s a little different from what I expected, but that’s still the first time anyone has said that to me...!”

“Just what are you saying!? Nevermind that, hurry up and get serious! Even if it’s you, you’ll still end up getting purified if this goes on!”

With a perplexed expression on his face, Duke tried to persuade Wiz who still refused to attack.

Wiz made an expression like she was addressing a petulant child,

“To be honest, it made me a little happy to hear those words. But no matter what you say, I have no intention of giving up my current job. Plus, I still don’t know you too well. So...”

While withstanding the light, Wiz shyly said,

“Can we start by being friends?”

A silence descended upon the scene.

Duke had an utterly confused expression on his face.

“Yeah! Well said, Wiz! Yeah, getting married so quickly would be too hasty, right!?”

“...Huh?”

Hearing Aqua’s jubilant cheers, Duke could only react blankly.

The magic circle that covered the cemetery faded away.

“Well, this is probably the best outcome... You’re Duke, right? What happened the other day was, er, me seducing you as a test, so don’t think I’m an easy woman. But it’s great that you aren’t rejected outright.”

“.....Huh?”

Darkness said with a smile, and Duke responded with yet another blank expression.

“I think that Wiz is a determined person. But, Duke, was it? There seems to be some misunderstanding, but don’t worry, Wiz is no longer in charge of exorcism jobs from the real estate agent or purifying the ghosts in this cemetery, so you don’t need to worry about her.”

“.....Huh?”

Megumin said with a wry smile, but Duke simply gave us a look of utmost confusion...

“What are you guys saying? What’s that about friends and marriage and don’t worry and what not? I really don’t follow at all.”

“What are you saying? This is what Wiz is saying: ‘Giving up my work or suddenly marrying is impossible, but let’s start by being friends and see how things go from there.’ Isn’t that great? Yeah, you did get rejected, but there’s still hope.”

Duke looked like he didn’t follow Aqua’s words at first, but then he slowly started trembling...

“W-What are you idiots saying!? Why must I be married to an undead Lich?! Where did that even come from?! And friends? What kind of joke is that!?”

“Eh!?”

Wiz let out a shocked voice upon hearing Duke’s words, and Aqua’s face fell as well.

“Hey, there’s no need to act like that just because you’ve been rejected! You were rushing things too much! It’s obviously too much to marry her right way! Just be happy that you can start as friends!”

“Like I said, why do all of you think I’m in love with this woman!? Is there something wrong with your brain!? This is only the third time I’ve met her, you know!?”

Duke agitatedly said, and Megumin gave him a mocking laugh.

“You have the gall to say that after you stalked Wiz!? And weren’t you the one who proposed that she quit working at the magic item shop and come live with you!?”

“Huh?”

Duke thoughtfully looked upwards for a moment, before burying his face in both his hands.

“...The job I want her to quit is her position as a General of the Demon King’s Army...”

“...Huh?”

In response to Megumin’s questioning expression, Duke replied in an extremely soft voice,

“Like I said, the job I was referring to is her position as a Demon King’s General. It has nothing to do with the magic item shop...”

With an extremely tired expression, Duke moved to remove the robe he was wearing.

Everyone other than Aqua and me averted their gaze. Just then, Wiz let out a scream.

“Aah! T-That’s the Demon King’s...”

An unfamiliar crest was tattooed upon Duke’s chest.

Wiz seemed to be shocked by that mark, but our attention was drawn to a different location.

“Aah! Hold on, you were a fallen angel!? Here I thought you were a rare good person who hated devils and undead like me, but you’re just another fool who defied the word of the gods!”

“S-Shut up! And what about you!? I thought you were a great friend who shared my hatred of undead and devils, and even cheerfully spread bad rumours about Goddess Eris with me until the morning, but what’s with your clothes!? You were a priest!?”

A pair of black, feathered wings extended from Duke’s back.

If Aqua were to be believed, he was originally an angel.

If that crest on his chest is the mark of the Demon King’s, then that means that this angel has fallen and is now an underling of the Demon King.

Aqua let out an expression more prideful than anything I’ve seen before and proudly

thrust her chest out at the fuming Duke.

“You really are an idiot. Who do you think I am? A mere fallen angel should hurry up and kneel before me! My name is Aqua! The one worshipped by 20 million Axis cultists all over the world! Yes, Goddess Aqua herself!”

Duke widened his eyes...!

“Great, so she’s just insane...”

“Hey, hold it right there!”

Aqua sounded like she was on the verge of tears, but then she seemed like she suddenly remembered something.

“So that’s why you could use Holy Magic! How could you do that!? You fell after going against the word of the gods, but you still dare to call upon their powers the moment you get into a pinch? Do you have no shame!?”

“S-Shut up! We angels get run ragged by the gods! It’s only fair that we get a little power as payment! If anything, I’m just collecting a little bit of late payment for my services! You probably don’t know this, but the goddesses are all...”

At that moment.



“FU HA HA HA HA HA! FU HA HA HA HA HA!”

An arrogant and evil mocking laughter filled the area.

It came from within the graveyard, but when did he get here?

“Welcome to this remote town, one who dreams of becoming a Demon King’s General. You were originally a servant of the hateful gods in the first place, but it seems like you just got more pathetic after falling!”

It was a tall man clad in sharp tuxedo and a mask covering the top half of his face.

The devil that sees through all and duke of hell, the great devil Vanir, stood atop a tall structure within the graveyard.

Part 6

“Seems like I made it in time for the best part! Oh, to think that I almost missed such an amazing event!”

Vanir seemed quite joyful, but what does he mean by amazing event?

He was originally a Demon King’s General too. Are they acquainted or something?

“...Vanir-dono, this is between me and Wiz. You may be a former General of the Demon King, but please do not interfere.”

Duke probably recognised the threat that Vanir poses. He slowly backed away, not bothering to hide his wariness.

Just then,

“...So you deceived me?”

Completely ignoring the new arrival, Wiz softly said, her head kept low.

“What do you mean deceived? It has always been my intention to challenge you for the position of the Demon King’s General. I tried to remove my robe when we first met, didn’t I? That was so I could show you this crest and explain things to you.”

Duke honestly explained, but Wiz kept her head down and continued.

“...I-I thought it was a proposal... This was the first time someone confessed to me...”

“I-Is that so? That’s most unfortunate. Even so, this is still way too huge of a misunderstanding. This is but the third time we’ve met. There’s no way I would propose so soon.”

That made sense.

It certainly made sense, but right now, Wiz is in no state to hear such things.

“I-I, I’ve been spending day and night seriously considering if I should really give up running the store... But I thought it’d be too pitiful for Vanir-san, so I came here to turn

you down... Is it really that fun to toy with the heart of a Lich?! I won't forgive you! This is the first time I've been so thoroughly humiliated! It was more humiliating than when I clashed with Vanir-san back when I was still a human! I even thought it was a proposal! I can't believe you...!"

"Fuhaha~! Fuhaha~! Fuhahahahaha~!"

Ignoring the indignant Wiz, Vanir continued laughing in an extremely hearty voice as he rolled around on the floor, as though this was the funniest thing he had seen in centuries.

"Vanir-san! Just what is so funny!? You didn't foresee this, did you!?... Ah! 'The devil that sees through all so declares! When you respond to that man's feelings, a man will experience delight and merriment to a degree never before seen in this world.' You weren't referring to this when you said that, were you!? That man that will experience delight and merriment, that was referring to yourself after you've tasted my dark emotions!"

"Fuhaha~! Fuhahahahaha~! This is superb! These are dark emotions of the highest grade that Moi has not tasted in some time! They're delicious! They are delicious indeed! Fuhaha~!"

"Vanir-san!"

Wiz tearfully screamed at Vanir.

"W-Well, I apologize for that! But I have my complaints too! If you didn't live in this town, I wouldn't have to hide my crest, and this misunderstanding wouldn't happen in the first place. Yes, it's because you ignored your duties as a general to live in this town. I just couldn't leave things in the hands of such a klutz!"

Hearing Duke's retort, Wiz suddenly raised her head.

"I'm not a Demon King's General because I want to be! I'm only doing this because there's no one else that's magically skilled enough to maintain the barrier and the Demon King begged me to do it! How could you call me a klutz...!"

"You are a klutz! The number of generals have reduced to the point where even the barrier itself is at risk! Furthermore, our fortresses at the frontlines have fallen, and even that scheme that has been in the works for a long time in the shadows has fallen

through.”

...Hmm?

“After some investigation, I found that all of those incidents have something to do with that weak-looking man over there. I let my guard down thinking that he’s a weakling that would lose to a kobold, and this is how things ended up... Yes, you, Satou Kazuma!”

Somehow, the topic shifted over to me.

“‘I’m willing to support you.’ You said this when we met in the bar, didn’t you? You said that to make me let my guard down, and now you’ve even brought Vanir-dono over to surround me. Kukuku, you’re a pretty good schemer, aren’t you?”

Duke seemed to have some kind of misunderstanding about me.

But, well, it’s not like it’s a bad misunderstanding.

Should I play along and say something like ‘I’m surprised you noticed.’?

“I’ve already sent a report about this to Demon King-sama. This town will eventually become a priority target for the Demon King’s army.”

“Are you serious!?”

What the hell did this guy do?!

And here I thought that everything has calmed down and my harem life is about to begin...!

Ignorant of my inner turmoil, Duke let out a fearless smile,

— and was forcefully blown away just as he was about to continue.

I didn’t catch what happened, but when I looked at where Duke went,

“Eeh?”

His body was embedded deep inside one of the tombstones.

Duke shakily got to his feet and gazed in a certain direction.

At the other end of his gaze was Wiz, her hand pointed at Duke as she chanted. She probably blasted him with some kind of silent spell earlier.

“This town will become a priority target?... Are you going to attack this town?”

Wiz coldly said, and I felt someone tightly grip the hem of my clothes.

Turning back, I saw Aqua fearfully hide behind me as she peeked out at Wiz and the others.

“H-Hey, Kazuma, isn’t this getting a little dangerous? I really don’t think I have the luxury to enjoy this kind of play right now, so can you please undo this Bind?”

Darkness said while struggling with her binds, but I don’t really have time to care about her right now.

I recall seeing Wiz lose her temper once before.

“S-So you finally got serious. Still, as expected of a Lich. To be able to cast such a powerful spell without chanting... Your age really isn’t just for sho-”

Before he could finish, an invisible force once again smashed into Duke and slammed him back into the tombstone.

She’s already pissed off, and you choose to taunt her about her age? This guy might be dumber than I thought.

“Kazuma, things are getting a little suspicious. Being tightly held down like this by someone I like isn’t too bad, but I’m not Darkness, so can you please let go of me? I want to make preparations so I can cast my magic at any time.”

“If I let you free, you’ll just ignore the mood and steal her kill, right? Don’t worry, now that Wiz has snapped, we can leave it to her. Just watch.”

I kept my eyes focused on Wiz and Duke while answering Megumin.

Yes, that was when she learned the hot springs manager was eaten by a Demon King's General back when we were in Alcanretia.

If I recall, one of her conditions for not attacking the Demon King's Army was for them not to lay a hand on regular people. She really made a mess out of Hans, that Demon King's General back then.

Just as I excitedly gripped my fist in anticipation of the events to come, Vanir, who somehow made his way to my side without me noticing, said,

"Brat, it's best that you don't take your eyes off this. The devil that sees through all so declares, thou shalt see a most amazing sight."

I let out a wry smile as I heard the joy in Vanir's words. Seems like he was enjoying this.

This guy's been pushing for Wiz to get married, and now he's describing the sight of Wiz standing up to Duke to protect Axel as amazing, huh?

Sounds like this guy has trouble being honest, just like me.

"Uugh! I-Infer-"

"Cursed Crystal Prison!"

Wiz coldly encased Duke in a block of ice before he could complete his chant to release his flames.

With his upper body encased in ice, Duke's face rapidly turned blue as he repeatedly smashed himself against the ground.

But the ice remained intact, and Duke slowly started losing strength...

"Do you surrender?"

Wiz asked in a soft voice.

I wonder if Duke could even hear it while being encased in ice...

Duke looked at Wiz with bulging, lifeless eyes and lightly nodded.

-Duke collapsed to the ground after the ice vanished, sputtering and coughing.

Aqua happily rushed over to Wiz.

“Way to go, Wiz! This really is a fitting revenge for dumping you!”

“Wait, Aqua-sama, I didn’t do this for revenge!”

Aqua’s carefree words caused tears to well up in Wiz’s eyes.

Seeing her turn back to normal, I let out a breath I didn’t know I was holding.

“Hey, Vanir, why didn’t you tell us that Wiz had a misunderstanding? We would be able to finish this with a battle without having to go through such an ordeal if you told us.”

“Yeah! Hey, Vanir! I had to seduce that man because of you, you bastard!”

Vanir cheerfully laughed upon hearing Darkness’s and my complaints.

“What does Moi care about that? In order to taste the most exquisite dark emotions, Moi is willing to do anything. Yes, this harem brat who’s getting full of himself because the two of you are fighting over him. If, for instance, the two of you get disgusted and dump him, Moi will be able to experience some delicious dark emotions indeed.”

“C-Cut it out. No, seriously, please stop... I’ll go take some useless goods off your hands in the near future...”

Vanir smiled upon hearing my pleas.

“By the way... Things aren’t over just yet.”

“...Huh?”

I anxiously looked back towards Duke...

“W-What is he doing!?”

I couldn't help but cry out.

While we were busy with our own antics, Duke had hastily created a magic circle and thrust his black knife into his own heart.

"He actually did it! Look, brat! That man pretended to surrender, only to use that chance to perform one of the taboos of sorcery- yes, that's the ritual to become a Lich! Fuhaha~! He willingly turned himself into an undead that he was bashing just a short while ago in order to attain power! Fuhaha~! This is way too amusing!"

What's so funny about this situation?!

Duke was already fighting on par with Wiz. If he became a Lich...

"You let your guard down, Wiz! Gurk... Behold this overflowing mana of mine... Ah, power is just overflowing from the wound I made with my dagger! I can feel the cells in my body slowly dying off and turning into an undead existence! I might have fallen, but I was still originally an angel. I didn't want to do this if I could avoid it, but I have no choice... Now, let's have an eternal battle as fellow immortals-"

If he became the strongest undead...!

"Sacred Highness Exorcism!"

"GRAAAAAAH!"

Yeah, that'd happen.

The moment he became a Lich, Aqua, ignoring the mood as usual, blasted him with her purification magic.

Wiz sadly extended a hand to the slowly fading Duke.

"W-W-W-What is this...! I should have become the strongest undead, a Lich! What on earth...!"

“You ended up like this because you got involved with me... At the very least, I’ll grant you a painless death... Drain Touch...”

Duke became even fainter as his mana was sucked away by Wiz.

“Wait-Stop! No, don’t! Wait! This is a misunderstanding! It’s all a big misunderstanding!”

Facing his imminent death, Duke pinned his hopes on the most gullible one in our party, Wiz, and pleaded.

“Misunderstanding? After turning into a Lich, what’s there to misunderstand?”

Wiz answered in a stern voice. Guess even she isn’t kind enough to be fooled in this kind of situation.

“That’s the misunderstanding! T-The reason I became a Lich is... Yes, it’s not because I wanted to take revenge on you, but so I can be together with you for eternity as a fellow unaging undead!”

Facing such haphazardly put together excuses, even the kind and gentle Wiz will-

“T-That’s... Y-You can’t fool me! Such flowery words won’t...”

Actually, no, it seems like it’s quite effective on her.

Even Duke seemed surprised by how effective it is, but he immediately gathered his wits and...

“I-I’m not deceiving you! I fell in love with you during our battle! Of course, I won’t suddenly propose that we get married off the bat, but... just as you said earlier, I would like to request that we start by being friends!”

“S-Start by being friends...”

Crap, this is bad. To that Lich who is unfamiliar with matters of romance, that fallen angel who seemed like he’d fit right into a boyband might as well be her natural enemy.

Just when I was considering asking Megumin to blow him away before things get any worse,

Vanir excitedly said something to Wiz while desperately trying to conceal his smile.

“Kind and gullible shopkeeper, allow Moi to tell you something. Fallen angels and the angelic race are similar to devils in that they have no gender.”

Hearing that, Wiz violently pushed Duke away and started loudly chanting.

“W-Wait-!”

“EXPLOSION!!”



Wiz tearfully unleashed her explosion, cutting Duke off.

And Vanir rolled around on the ground, laughing until he was completely breathless-

Epilogue

On this rare occasion, the 'We're closed' plaque was hanging on the front of Wiz's magic item shop.

"Waaah! This is too much! It's way too much! Waah!"

Within the shop was Wiz, who has been wailing non-stop, and Vanir, standing next to her and desperately trying to hold back his laughter.

Vanir has been looking really glossy and happy recently.

It's probably due to all the dark emotions that he gets from Wiz every day.

"Come on, I'll share some of the vegetables I harvested, so cheer up, Wiz. It'll be fine, you're a decent girl, so I'm sure you'll meet a good man soon."

"*sob*, *sob* Aqua-sama... Will that really happen? Time won't just keep slipping by..."

Wiz momentarily raised her head from the counter after hearing Aqua's words.

"It's fine even if you wait. After all, aren't you immortal? That means there's no need for you to lower your standards just because you are getting old. That's a very big benefit, you know?"

Aqua's haphazard encouragement caused Wiz's face to brighten up ever so slightly.

"Y-Yeah, I don't age. I don't need to get desperate or lower my standards."

"Even if you don't get old, your age on the family registry will still go up."

"Hey, strange devil, stop saying unnecessary things! See! Wiz has started crying again!"

I kind of think I shouldn't feel this way while Wiz is crying like that, but I am a little relieved after seeing the usual rowdy scene within the store.

Duke said that this town will eventually become a priority target for the Demon King's

Army.

But, at least for now, everything is peaceful in this town of beginners, and there aren't any signs of an imminent attack.

I really hope things will continue like this...

Just then,

"Hey, how long do you intend to cry for, you heartbroken shopkeeper!? Stop moping around and open the store for business! Didn't you want to help Moi achieve my wish? At this rate, how many centuries will it take for me to be able to create my dungeon? Moi might be immortal, but it'd be pointless if humanity goes extinct before the dungeon is complete."

"You don't need to tell me that... As a Lich, no matter who I get together with, in the end, all I can do is watch them slowly age and be left alone... Even after humanity goes extinct, I'm sure I'll be all alone..."

Vanir sighed as he looked upon the sobbing Wiz. Seems like this incident really traumatised her.

"Seriously... You aren't the only immortal, you know? We devils are immortal too. Until the day my dungeon is complete and adventurers come to vanquish me, Moi will stay with you, so cheer up, my friend."

Hearing that, Wiz snapped her head upwards.

"...In other words, if the dungeon forever remains incomplete, Vanir-san will be with me forever?"

"Right, I'll set my sights on taking away your management rights. You couldn't be satisfied with facing such a half-baked opponent, right? Very well, it's been some time, but I'll be your opponent!"

Vanir grabbed Wiz by her collar and started dragging her to the entrance of the shop.

"Ah, wait, Vanir-san! I was just joking! I'm sorry, I apologize! I'll work hard! I'll work hard, so please forgive me!"

Under the clear sky tinted by the cold air of approaching winter, Wiz's cries echoed throughout the town of Axel-

"-Well, all's well that ends well, so that's a relief."

"Are you seriously saying it ended well after seeing that?"

On our way back from the magic item shop.

We took a winding route back through the town as we headed back home, shopping around and browsing goods as we went along.

"...Marriage, huh. Darkness, you're the sole heir to your family, so isn't it about time you start seriously considering it?"

Darkness frantically averted her gaze upon hearing Megumin's words.

"M-My father is quite understanding, so you could say I've been afforded more freedom in such matters compared to the other nobility... Though, I suppose I am at the age where I should start considering such issues. Still, if we talk about age, the most perilous one is Aqua."

"Hey, Kazuma, let me tell you something interesting. You see, Darkness keeps a diary of her daily experiences with us in her room. But that's not the interesting point, the interesting bit is that there's a strange mechanism underneath where she keeps that book, and in it is where she writes all of her fantasies-"

"Aqua, get over here! When did you get in? I'm sure I locked my room properly! How much do you know?"

Aqua was dragged away by Darkness before she could finish her interesting story.

Just when the mansion was almost in sight, Megumin suddenly said something.

"Kazuma, how many children do you want in the future?"

"Pfft!"

I couldn't help but do a spit take in response to Megumin's sudden question.

To be honest, I don't really hate children.

If I have to choose, I'd have to say I like them.

But, I just bought a few items to prevent accidents from happening from Vanir the other day.

Just when I was agonizing over the right way to answer this question, I noticed the figure of someone waiting for us outside the mansion.

That was a Crimson Demon with a large gift basket in her hand.

There's only one person who would bring such a gift every time she visited.

"Hey, if it isn't Yunyun. Did you come over to play and wait for us because we were out? What should we play today? I'm very excited after seeing someone else's Explosion today, so why don't we head over to the lake and see who can catch the most fish..."

Hmm, something seems strange about Yunyun.

Wait, could it be that old cliché again? Is she here to drag me into some other trouble?

I have the ability to learn from experience, you know?

"Umm, well... I have a request for Kazuma-san..."

Yeah, I knew it.

But Megumin interposed herself between us, as though she was trying to protect me.

Her eyes were glowing bright red. She moved her face close to Yunyun to the point where they are almost nose to nose, and in a threatening tone, said,

"What do you want with Kazuma? Why is everyone always coming to this man for help whenever they have a problem? Don't they have any shame?"

"I already failed the trial twice because of you, so I can't fail again!!!"

Yunyun's screams echoed through the sunny sky-

Afterword

Thank you for buying the 13th volume of Gifting this Wonderful World with Blessings!

Time really passes by in a flash. It's been already been four years since I debuted as an author with this series.

After coming this far, I would say that I'm one of the veteran authors, so a little bit of willfulness on my part can be forgiven by the editors.

For instance, requesting that they go to a fantasy world to take photos of actual goblins to provide reference material for me would be easy, and reserving Shinjuku station for a day so I can play hide and seek on the premises would be a cinch too.

Compared to that, adjusting the deadline a little so I can enjoy being a NEET for a while would be like taking candy from a baby- ah, I can't? Sorry, I'll work hard from now on too.

Now then, this volume is mostly focused on Wiz and Vanir.

They have a relationship much like Aqua and Kazuma, but one of them is genderless, so it won't ever become a romantic comedy.

Thus, the left-behind shopkeeper will forever be (Etc Etc)

Anyway, the next volume would be about the Crimson Demons.

Will the lonely girl with a extremely low sense of presence be saved, or will she have to stop declaring herself to be the future chief of the Crimson Demons?

Find out in the next volume.

— Oh, yeah, I released a new work titled "Combatants Will Be Dispatched!"

It's a story about the underling combatants of an evil organization with their sights set on world conquest. In order to find new worlds to invade, those combatants are dispatched to new planets.

It's a fantastical story where the combatants, who have received surgical modifications, fight a demon king using modern weapons.

If that piques your interest, please consider buying a copy!

Anyway, this volume really caused a lot of people a lot of trouble, but we managed to get it published somehow.

This is all thanks to the efforts of Mishima Kurone-sensei and all the people involved.

I really can't thank everyone involved in getting this book into your hands enough.

And, above all, my deepest thanks to everyone who purchased this book.

Akatsuki Natsume

Short Story 1

A real magic item!

On a certain afternoon.

I was free and stopped by the adventurer's guild in search of something to do, and for some reason, a crowd has gathered there.

"...? Hey, what's all this fuss about?"

"Oh, isn't that Kazuma? It's magic items. A magic item peddler has arrived."

A familiar adventurer told me, and I reacted instantly upon hearing the term "Magic item."

"There's got to be some kind of downside, right? Like it'll explode upon use or it'll affect all targets indiscriminately or something."

"These aren't the items that Wiz-san sells, so you don't have to worry about that. You're loaded, so why don't you take a look? Your companions are already out there picking stuff out."

Turning over at his words, I saw my companions were indeed over there, picking up items as they wished.

"Oh, Kazuma, you came to the right place. Look at this item! It's a potion that can increase my magic power for a short time! There are no downsides! I would like to borrow some money!"

"Kazuma-san, Kazuma-san, this is a cleaning tool that will spin around once supplied with mana. I would really like you to buy it. It'd be much easier to clean the toilets with this. Oh, and it seems like there are no downsides."

I don't know why they are emphasizing the fact that it has no downsides, but it seems like these things are at least usable.

That said, increasing Megumin's magic power any further would only cause more problems, and Aqua will probably break it soon enough if I buy it for her.

And, standing next to them, Darkness was looking at something in her hand with a troubled expression.

"A bandana that can increase dexterity, huh... Should I buy it? No, wait, in that case, my attacks will hit. But, on the other hand, we've been going up against a lot of strong enemies recently..."

"Right, buy it. Buy it right now. Actually, I'll pay for it, so put it on right now."

After finding an item that's perfect for Darkness, I immediately made to purchase it.

"Wha-Kazuma! No, wait, this has, you know, downsides..."

"It doesn't have any! Just give it to me, I'll pay for it!"

"Ah!"

After taking the bandanna off Darkness's hands, I looked over the goods on display to see if there's anything else worth buying.

They said it was a peddler, so I was expecting some useless garbage, but I managed to get my hands on a very convenient item.

It'd be perfect if there's a staff that allows you to use other kinds of spells, or an item that increases intelligence.

"That's unfair, Kazuma! Please buy my item too! Or at least lend me some money!"

"I don't want to return this, so please buy it for me! This magic item will definitely be fun! If I put some water on it and make it spin, it'll definitely spray water everywhere. If I use it well, it can be used as part of a party trick to create rainbows!"

"Shut up! You don't need that stuff! Even if I bought that potion for you, Megumin, you'll just drink it immediately without waiting for a boss to appear! And that thing isn't a toy, Aqua!"

Pushing aside the two of them who were clinging onto me, my eyes fell upon

something interesting.

“What’s this? Paralyze stone?”

“Oh, you have a good eye, dear customer. That’s an exceptional item that has a certain chance of paralyzing a target it hits. That said, there is a downside...”

The old man peddler explained as I looked over the stone in my hand.

“In addition to the chance of paralyzation being low, it’s quite rare, so there’s only one for sale. On top of that, it’s pretty expensive, and it’s not a suitable item to trust your life to in the heat of battle... After all, if the paralyzation fails to work, the enemy can pick it up, and it’d now be a threat to you. It’s an item that anyone can use, so now you’d be the one at risk of being paralyzed.”

... Indeed, there’s no point in handing your opponent a convenient item.

If there’s no guarantee that the effect will go off, it’d be like handing over a weapon to your opponent...

Just then, I realized something.

“Old man, I’ll buy this stone.”

“Huh? Are you sure, dear customer? I mean, as a storeowner, it’d be a great help if you’d take it off my hands, but...”

After handing over the money to the old man, I turned towards Megumin with the stone in hand.

“Hey, Megumin, you want to try taking on my new technique?”

“Oh? Well, as long as it wouldn’t harm me, I don’t mind.”

As expected of the Crimson Demons. They understand the appeal of a new technique.

I threw the paralyze stone towards Megumin as she nodded.

The moment the stone made contact, I used a skill I had prepared in advance.

“Steal!”

“Ouch!”

As I intended, in my hand was...

“Hey.”

“That’s not it, hear me out.”

With Megumin’s underwear in my hand, I immediately started with a denial.

“My new technique is meant to allow me to retrieve the paralyze stone after it hits an opponent. It’s a technique that allows me to throw an infinite number of paralyze stones. My Steal has a weird trait of targeting more expensive items. In other words, it’s your fault for wearing expensive panties!”

“I don’t wear expensive panties! Actually, I can’t move!”

Just then, I noticed something odd with the surrounding atmosphere.

“Y-You came up with an amazing technique of paralyzing someone and stealing their panties...”

“You devil... No, comparing you to them is an insult to devils...”

Oh, crap, I think I just raised another Scumzuma flag.

“Say, Kazuma... How much do I have to pay to experience that new technique of yours?”

Darkness looked at the paralyze stone in my hand with an envious expression.

“I won’t use it on you no matter how much you pay! Old man, I want a refund! Hey, Aqua, don’t pretend like you don’t know me, help me persuade him for a refund!”

Today, my reputation once again took another great hit.

–Afterwards, I gave Darkness the bandanna that increases your dexterity, but of course, she still couldn’t hit anything.

Short Story 2

The winter moon is...

The two Crimson Demons warily gazed around the clearing on the outskirts of town before whispering to each other.

“You’re here, Megumin. Did you have any problems? You weren’t seen by the others, were you?”

“Don’t worry, I confirmed that no one was following me before coming here, and I also asked what everyone back at home was planning on doing today. Kazuma said that he didn’t want to be woken up before evening, Aqua was heading out to the river to gather interesting looking pebbles, and even the recently free Darkness has gone out to oversee the engineering crew in filling in the nearby craters that the Explosion Devil created last night.”

It’s really handy to have the Lip Reading skill at such times.

Regardless of the distance, as long as I can see their mouths, I can follow their conversation.

“Make sure you properly apologize to Darkness-san after this, okay?”

“Forget after this, ever since last night, I’ve been lectured by her all the way until this morning. I vehemently denied it and demanded that she show me proof, but it seems like that just made things worse.”

“I don’t know why you would deny it to such a degree, but nevermind. Let’s just hurry up and get it done while nobody’s here.”

Saying that, Yunyun started piling up the bricks in the clearing into what appeared to be a simple stove.

Megumin then placed the pot she carried with her on top of the stove, and brought out something from it.

“This color and fragrance... I can’t believe you managed to get your hands on this...”

Yunyun showed a very intoxicated expression after taking a whiff from the bottle.

“This is a pretty top grade item if I say so myself. Heheh, this will definitely become the best ritual ever!”

Seemingly satisfied, the two nodded at each other before throwing the items they brought with them into the pot and lighting a fire underneath it.

“Hehehehehe... Right, now, all that’s left is the secret technique passed down amongst the Crimson Demons...”

Sneaking up on Megumin as she mumbled about some strange things while stirring the pot, I asked,

“What secret technique?”

“AHHHHH!”

The two of them screamed in surprise after hearing my voice and hastily turned around.

“K-K-K-Kazuma, don’t scare me like that! No, wait, that’s not it, what are you doing here!?”

“This is bad, Megumin! Someone else saw the contents of the pot!”

I don’t know what kind of suspicious ritual they were performing, but the two of them flew into a panic after seeing me.

“Damn... Now that you’ve seen it, we have no choice. You should gather your resolve, Yunyun.”

“H-How did this...”

“Hey, hold on a minute, you two aren’t thinking about doing something dangerous, are you!? If it’s some kind of top secret ritual passed down through the Crimson Demons, I can pretend I didn’t see it, so let’s calm down and talk things through!”

Looking at me slowly retreat, the two of them looked at each other and nodded.

“... Right, why don’t you lend us a hand, Kazuma? We’ll give you a portion of the secret Crimson Demon rabbit hot pot if you do.”

“Yeah, it’s a secret, but it can’t be helped if you saw it. Kazuma-san, can you help us stir the pot?”

.....

“Wait, rabbit hot pot? You snuck out here and did all those cloak and dagger stuff just to make a hot pot? Weren’t you doing something like calling down an evil god or something?”

“What are you talking about, Kazuma? We don’t need stuff like evil gods and the like. We’re planning on going moonwatching after this. This is the best day of the year for that.”

... Moonwatching?

“Should you really be doing such things in autumn? It’s freezing.”

“Kazuma-san, the colder it is, the clearer the air will be, and thus the moon will appear to be more beautiful.”

I see. Yeah, I have heard that you can see more stars during winter.

However...

“I’m surprised. To think that the Crimson Demons that are the furthest away from any sense of aesthetics and elegance would have a tradition of moonwatching...”

“Hey, hold on a minute, just what do you think Crimson Demons are, Kazuma?”

“There are artists amongst the Crimson Demons too! And we also do stuff like picnics and hikes, you know!?”

Ignoring the two of them, I started stirring the stuff in the pot.

“Anyway, why rabbit hot pot?”

“We aren’t really sure about that either. It seems like a famous Crimson Demon once said that talking about the moon brings rabbits to mind, or something along those lines.”

Guess it’s the same old story. This world really does have a lot of warped Japanese legends.

— The sun has started to set beyond the horizon, and the beautiful moon is slowly rising to the heavens.

“Well, I think we can start moonwatching now. Are the two of you ready?”

“Yeah. I’ve put in a lot of practice in preparation for this day.”

“It’s really cold, so I would like to hurry up and finish my hot pot and head home... And what do you mean by practice?”

Yunyun seemed to have said something strange while I was distracted by the delicious smell wafting from the hot pot.

“Right, we’re starting. Yunyun, make sure you go along with me.”

Just as Megumin said that, the two Crimson Demons started howling at the moon.

“What are you two doing!? I don’t get it at all! Are you two trying to become one with nature!? Do the Crimson Demons have werewolf blood in them as well?!”

“Moonwatching obviously involves howling. Come on, Kazuma, join us!”

“It might be embarrassing at first, but it’s really fun once you get used to it. It’s just like working together with companions...”

No, this isn’t the moonwatching I wanted to experience!

“Look, Kazuma, isn’t the moon beautiful...”

“Yeah, that’s a very famous line in my country, but with Yunyun howling at my side, I can’t feel a single shred of romance in this situation at all!”

The beautiful moon shone brightly in the sky on this cold winter night.

The Crimson Demon moonwatching ceremony continued until a couple of patrolling policemen came around to admonish them-

<TL note: The phrase “Tsuki ga Kirei desu ne” (“Isn’t the moon beautiful?”) is a famous Japanese way to say “I love you”. The phrase was translated by Meiji-era novelist and teacher Natsume Souseki since he believed that two people in love do not need direct words to convey their feelings>

Short Story 3

The Lap pillow of the false Shopkeeper

Just what the hell is going on?

“Why did you do such a thing, Vanir-san!? How do we remove this!? (Moi didn’t think that you’d have such a strange resistance to this! This is the first time Moi has possessed a Lich, so this is completely unexpected! Now that it’s come to this, why don’t you just leave your body and spirit in my care and let me manage this store?) I don’t want that! Who knows what will happen to my body if I were to let you do as you wish!”

Along with Aqua, I came to Wiz’s magic store to play around, and upon seeing this scene...

“Hey, what kind of game are you two playing? Is it fun?”

“Ah, Aqua-sama! Actually (If it isn’t the troublesome goddess that only appears at times like this! As you can see, we are very busy right now, so go back home!)”

Hearing Wiz’s words, Aqua’s jaw dropped in surprise.

No, I suppose it’d be more accurate to say that they were Vanir’s words, spoken through the possessed Wiz.

“Y-You... I know you’ve been giving me a bit more tea and snacks lately, but don’t think just that will be enough to excuse such a tone!”

“C-C-Calm down, Aqua-sama! Look carefully, that just now was (There’s no way a Lich like me would want to curry favour with goddesses in the first place! The tea that I served you in the past were all expired goods. Didn’t you notice-) I really will get angry, Vanir-san!”

Even though Vanir tried to make matters worse, after that back and forth, even Aqua has caught onto what was going on.

“Say, Wiz, at the end of the day, aren’t you a Lich? How could you let your body be taken over by a devil so easily? And you, weird devil, do you really like Wiz that much? Do you really want to stick to Wiz that much?”

Yes, Vanir’s mask was currently attached to Wiz’s face.

Just like how it was when he possessed Darkness, the two of them seemed to be waging an internal battle for control of the body.

“Even if you say that (If it were up to Moi, if moi had to possess a body, moi would obviously choose a better, easier to control vessel!) In short, Vanir-san... Hey, hold on a minute, Vanir-san! How could you say that after suddenly possessing me!”

“I see. I don’t get it at all. Can you two explain things one at a time... Seriously, just what happened here?”

Things wouldn’t progress at all if they kept this up, so we stopped the two and listened to them recount the events leading up to this.

“That would be... Vanir-san said that he wants to sell a new product, but, well, he calls it a product, but... (A shop where the owner provides a service of lap pillows and ear cleanings. Doesn’t this shopkeeper look like she’s overflowing with kindness and curves? So I conducted a survey amongst the adventurers that went, ‘If such a shop existed, would you frequent it?’. More than 50% of them said that they would become regular customers, 30% of them said, ‘hurry up and open the store!’, and 20% of them wished that the lap pillow be available for afternoon naps as well. It was very well received.)”

“Of course I’ll become a regular customer too! When are you opening? Will you be offering afternoon naps and bed warmer services too?”

“Don’t joke with me too, Kazuma-san! In the first place, my lap and such is too cold, so it wouldn’t be very comfortable, and it’s too shameless! I can’t do that...! Plus, all the adventurers who responded to the survey were just joking with me!”

Though, I do feel that people will really come to make use of such a store...

“I see, so you wanted to force Wiz to do that... But Wiz is kind and soft, so I think that it wouldn’t be a bad experience. Why don’t you let me try!?”

“Let Aqua-sama try... Well, I don’t have a problem with that... But I’ve never cleaned another person’s ear before, so...”

Saying that, Wiz sat upon her knees, and Aqua immediately rested her head on her lap.

“...Come on, you’re doing pretty well for your first time. I think I might nod off like this... Hey, Wiz, it’s starting to hurt a little. You don’t have to dig that deep, do you? Hey, did you hear me? It hurts!”

“What are you doing, Vanir-san? I won’t let you have your way! (Hey, Wiz, stop getting in my way! This is the perfect opportunity! Moi won’t give up like this!)”

And thus Aqua almost suffered a lethal wound while having her ears cleaned. It’s only thanks to Wiz’s resistance that nothing major happened.

“Well... I understand how you were possessed, but how did you two become inseparable?”

“(Hmm, well, Liches are fundamentally cursed existences. After possessing such a thing, Moi ended up getting cursed too.) Don’t make it sound like I’m a cursed item!”

Hmm.....

“Well, I am fairly interested in the lap pillow ear cleaning business, so why don’t we just keep things as it is?”

“No! If I’m sharing the same body as Vanir-san, I wouldn’t be able to even take a bath! (There’s no need to worry about that, Moi has no interest in your naked body at all, so you can rest assured and attend to your business.) You’re tactless! Vanir-san is way too tactless! Can’t you borrow Aqua-sama’s power and think of some way to separate us!?”

Looking at Wiz on the verge of tears, Aqua showed a troubled expression.

“If I use purification magic until only one of you is left, would that count as separating you two?”

“Please think of some other method! Kazuma-san is especially reliable at times like this, so do you have any good ideas!?”

Even if you suddenly ask me, I can't...

“When a ring gets stuck on your finger, you can easily slip it off after coating it with soap and the like.”

“I’m begging you, Kazuma-san, please think more seriously about this! (Why don’t you just give up and open the lap pillow service? We’ll be able to earn some more money and eat something more filling than what you have now.) No! Plus it’d be very troublesome if things were to continue like this. Speaking of which, ever since this started, well... (Ah, Moi see. Don’t worry, young lady, Moi will try my best to not hear anything, so...) AAAAAAAHHHH!”

Thanks to Vanir’s unnecessary concern, Wiz’s scream resonated throughout the store.

— Later, the mask was easily removed after coating it with soap.

Atogaki





One needs to take a tough trial that has been passed down since ancient times in order to become the Chief of the Crimson Demons. And there's a condition to undertake the trial.

Hey Kazuma, will dried stuff be good for snacks!?



That condition is that one needs to bring along a trusted partner.

Hey, Aqua, just eating dried snacks will make you thirsty. Let's bring some fruits and the like too.



I can create fresh water, so you don't need to bring any drinks!

COMING
SOON!!

S-so, who will be my partner...!?



GIFTING this
WONDERFUL
WORLD with
BLESSINGS! 14



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